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Editorial Note

After a recent review, and with much regret, we have decided to discontinue the publication of *Management in Government*. This is the last issue, ending 39 years of publication from the first issue of the *O & M Bulletin* in August 1945 through nine years from 1973 to 1981 under the title of *Management Services in Government* and a mere two and a half years under its present title.

We hope that in future our readers and contributors will be able to find the material which interests them in a number of different ways:

- for the civil service readership, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury hope to produce occasional publications dealing with particular issues of general service-wide interest; they will be tailored to be relevant to a specific civil service audience;
- for the wider readership, much more information is, of course, nowadays released by Government as a matter of course; we hope to encourage contributors who would have sent us their copy to submit their work to other specialised journals in the same broad field.

The final note must be one of thanks, to all those who have contributed to the journal in the past, and to our readers who regrettably were not in sufficient numbers to justify the continuing publication of the journal.

Management in the Civil Service

Sir Peter Carey GCB

Sir Peter Carey retired at the end of April 1983. He had then held the post of Permanent Secretary at the Department of Industry for over six years, following a career of which a large part was spent in the Board of Trade and the Department of Industry.

I retired from the Civil Service in April of last year and have had the intervening months to think about the nature of that Service and my own career in it. I also now have the advantage of personal involvement in some industrial and financial companies which gives me a yardstick of comparison in matters of management.

The first point to strike me is the great changes which have taken place since I joined the Service in 1948. My first day as a newly-arrived Assistant Principal is etched on my memory. I had been allocated to the German Section of the Foreign Office (then a home department) and I arrived as instructed punctually at 10 am in the old India Office building. My name was handed in and I was invited to sit on a bench in one of those broad historic corridors. I recall watching the August sunlight filtering through the dust and illuminating the majestic pictures and statues of past imperial heroes, and I wondered how my career was going to compare with theirs. Not, it seemed, too well, since by 11 am nobody had sought me out, and the one-legged messenger who traversed the corridors with important-looking boxes or tubes did not give me a second glance. At length I thought that the time had come to

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demonstrate initiative: perhaps indeed this was some sort of test of it such as we had been put through during the three-day selection process at Stoke d'Abernon. I accordingly accosted the messenger, pointing out that I had been told to report at 10 am, that I had dutifully done so, that it was now past 11 am and that perhaps there was some misunderstanding. He agreed, with what I thought to be a slight curl of the lip, to make enquiries; and a few minutes thereafter a pert secretary appeared who invited me to follow her. I was then ushered into the presence of a tall, white-haired man who rose and shot out a hand in apologetic greeting. This had a disconcerting effect since he only had one hand: was I, I wondered, joining an institution where my advancement would be handicapped by my having all my limbs? (though I took some comfort from the fact that the secretary seemed to have everything in place). Etiquette had not prepared me for this situation; should I grasp a left hand with my own left — or my right? I dithered, and felt that an unpromising start was clearly here.

The gentleman turned out to be an Assistant Secretary — temporary (and, incidentally, the current mayor of Chelsea). The point of the story is that, today, it would be unthinkable to treat a new graduate entrant so casually: they are a scarce and precious resource, to be handled with skill and care. If not, they will be up and off elsewhere. Then, once you had passed the exam you settled back thankfully into a lifetime in the Service. The tradition of amateurism was still strong, and management as it is understood today was a second-class function, relatively inexpert and rudimentary. This worried me at first, but I quickly became absorbed in the role of policy advice, which seemed to be much more interesting and what I had joined the Service to do. Indeed, the first genuinely managerial job I had was when I became a Permanent Secretary.

Looking back, I see this as a cardinal weakness, not only in my own career but in the Service as a whole. How can one really be expected to manage a Department of 10,000 people — still less a Service of 650,000 — without some professional training in the task? Of course, the gifted amateur has notable strengths, not least good intuitive judgment, an unclouded mind, a breadth of outlook and a relaxed manner. The Empire, after all, depended on such people who administered vast territories successfully without a vestige of formal training. But the trouble was that those to whom one delegated in the past were equally untutored in the arts of management: no Principal Establishment Officer in any department in which I served was a professional manager. He was a generalist administrator who for most of his career had been concerned with policy and who came to his establishment task by chance, not conscious planning. In the circumstances, most did extraordinarily well, but not, I suggest, well

enough The seeds of the trouble through which the Service has been passing in recent years were sown a long time back. We failed to take adequate account of the strains which were beng imposed by rapidly growing numbers and more complex functions; by increased union power; by arbitrary interference with pay determination; by the need for better communication down the line; and by new technology.

Fulton should have dealt with this situation, but a curate's egg of a report emerged from a badly constituted committee. Predictably, the reaction of the Service was tacitly to close its ranks against the spirit of Fulton's recommendations, if not the letter. An important opportunity for modernisation of the Service was thus put aside for the time being, and we paid a high price for the delay. We seemed surprised by the unprecedented strike which then hit us in 1981, but the signs had all been there. We were slow, too, to embrace new technology where a more imaginative management approach could have benefited both the Service and the supplying industry.

I have observed a close parallel between the Service and industry. Both were lulled by the comparative prosperity of the sixties into an unthinking acceptance of over-manning, rigid hierarchies, out-dated working practices and inadequate productivity. The pressures of the last few years forced dramatic change on industry as an alternative to bankruptcy. While the Service did not face so stark a choice, pressures were generated by ministers in search of ecoomies and improved efficiency. I personally regretted that it was necessary to bring in Lord Rayner to help us do what we should have done for ourselves; but necessary it was. Of course, we had already instituted a lot of reform and brushed up our professionalism immensely. But we lacked the sense of urgency which Lord Rayner's arrival injected.

I believe strongly that as a nation we shall benefit from retaining a non-politicised Civil Service. On the other hand I have seen at first-hand the benefit of a cross-fertilisation of experience. It is no longer satisfactory that people who rise to top positions in the Service should spend thirty-five years in one environment. At some stage they should go outside for a period, get a breath of fresh air. This is most important for the Treasury, where the atmosphere is at its most rarified. It doesn't matter too much where they go — indústry, the City, akademeia, abroad. The value lies in rubbing shoulders with people whose problems and thought processes are different.

By the same token there is great value in having people come into the Service from outside for period appointments. The less blatantly political these appointments are, the more they are likely to succeed: the most valuable contribution comes from those individuals with a special skill not to be found — or not developed to the same degree — with the

Service. Such people are welcomed by the civil servants whose own capability is materially enhanced by their collaboration. I found this to be particularly true in the field of advanced technology, for example, where Government has increasingly to respond to new developments without the in-house skills adequately to do so.

I accordingly look forward to a future in which management in the Service enjoys much greater flexibility in regard to both ingress and egress. It must be able to recruit developed skills from outside and it must also be able to send people out, at all levels and for varying periods, including early retirement without financial loss. Of course, high standards must be maintained and career opportunities safeguarded. But we need to refresh our sources periodically, and I believe that the greater flexibility I am seeking would in fact improve both efficiency and morale.

I also look forward to a future where delegation from the centre becomes a reality. I have found in the corporate sector that nothing encourages initiative and responsibility more than a devolved structure. Your line manager in the Service is too often frustrated by insufficient availability of management tools. He cannot, for example, determine recruitment, remuneration, promotion, removal, length of tenure, or location, all of which are matters decided centrally, sometimes within a department but often across the Service as a whole. Now I do not pretend that one can treat the Civil Service like a company, however large. But I do believe that means must be found to make management a task really worth devoting effort to down the line. There has been much lip-service paid to this concept, little genuine delegation of power to implement it in practice. Your best people must be encouraged to look upon management as a responsibility of prime importance, not as secondary to policy advice. And they will do this only if they perceive the chance to influence events, to secure improvements in performance.

This brings me to the subject of the role of ministers in management of the Service. Traditionally, ministers have left this function to their permanent civil servants. Latterly, however, they have been encouraged to play a much more active role. The reason is not far to seek: it lies in the perceived weaknesses of which I have been speaking. Ministers have found themselves frustrated in the implementation of their declared policies by the inertia and inflexibility of the machine they have inherited. Of course, in some ways that machine is smooth-running to an extent which adds to the frustration: it is perfectionist and immensely thorough. But the thoroughness is along well-worn lines; a change of course is as slow to achieve as that of a giant tanker. And ministers don't have time to spare. They have to achieve their purpose in a department in a period of two to three years, frequently less. And they

dissipate a part of this scarce time in trying to make the machine more responsive.

Now, I personally believe that this is a wasteful and unnecessary process. Ministers are amateurs of management: it is not their skill or, frequently, inclination. Extremely few have had experience in genuinely managing a large organisation over a prolonged period. And in the isolated cases where they have, they have not been notably successful as politicians — which is what they esentially need to be. If therefore one accepts that, in modern conditions, management is a highly professional skill which has to be painstakingly developed over a long period, ministers are not the people to undertake it. Of course, in the light of their accountability, they must have a broad, supervisory role, satisfying themselves that the management capability is there, and they must have information flows which enable them to exercise judgement and select priorities. But there simply is not time for them to do much more with real effect. The fact that they have felt it necessary to try is, I fear, a reflection on the permanent management of the Service which must recognise its responsibility to provide the more responsive and flexible machine ministers want.

Would this not lead, one might be asked, to greater discontinuities, to more rapid changes of direction, to the loss of that stability on which we pride ourselves and which may indeed be claimed to have served us well? There is a danger that it might. But the other danger is, I believe, greater, that ministerial frustration will lead to much more extensive politicisation, with all that that entails. By further improving the management competence of the Service, by reducing its inertia, we shall blunt the thrust of that politicisation.

Have I then been dissatisfied with my own career in the Service? Emphatically not. If I criticise, it is because I care. I have had an opportunity to observe the Civil Services of other countries and I have no doubt that our own is second to none. Moreover, I believe this to be the view of most ministers who, despite any frustration of a general character, have usually exressed themselves as highly satisfied with the particular service they get in their departments. My confidence, too, for the future is great: the Service is on the move, and in the right direction. The younger managers in particular have a combination of intellectual skills and progressive attitudes which bode well for the development of the Service. My hope is that ministers, now and in the future, will recognise the intrinsic value of the machine at their disposal, and treat it accordingly.

Equal Opportunities for Women in the Public Sector: Making the Most of Resources

Earl of Gowrie

This is the edited text of an address given by Lord Gowrie to a meeting of the Royal Institute of Public Administration at Newcastle on 9 March 1984. Lord Gowrie is Minister of State at the Privy Council Office; he is responsible, under the Prime Minister, for day-to-day management of the Management and Personnel Office (part of the Cabinet Office); and he is Minister for the Arts.

Introduction: the modern manager

To the thoroughly modern managers in the public sector in 1984, equal opportunities policy is something they do without thinking. And before you accuse me of archetypal male chauvinist complacency let me explain what I mean.

The modern manager — whether he or she is in the public or private sector — will be in charge of substantial resources, human and material. He or she will have financial support from various sources. He or she will have a building or buildings to operate from. Those buildings will contain machinery and equipment and — most important of all — people. If this manager is any good at all, those people will be handled very carefully and managed as any other precious resources. So — for example — the clerk who juggles figures with consummate ease might get trained as a statistician or accountant and be brought on within the system. The middle manager, who after a good deal of service could be

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a touch stale, might get a refresher posting to a lively division possibly abroad or in a different location. The young female high-flier might go part-time for a spell — rather than leaving for good — in order to keep her career pressure up whilst raising a family.

These three examples are about flexible, sensible management practice to bring on staff and get the best results from them. It so happens that one of them involves a woman who wants to combine a career with running a family. But fundamentally they are each an example of the intelligent use of human resources. And our thoroughly modern manager will expect to use the human resources available intelligently as a matter of course — not as a special policy.

However, I have begun by talking about the 'paragons' in management. At a more human level there are the ones who are good, but who have blind-spots about female staff. These managers need to be awakened to the real problems which do exist and which do need tackling. Then there are the mediocre managers who, despite their protestations of innocence, have a very outdated caricature view of women and their capabilities. These managers exist in the Civil Service as they exist elsewhere. And they must be prevented from having the wasteful effect such slack thinking and management threatens to have.

It is very important therefore that senior managers in the Civil Service, and that includes of course Ministers themselves, give the necessary lead. I fully support the principle that there should be equal opportunities for women in all forms of employment as does the Government. But that principle is one part of a wider issue affecting the whole of modern industrial society, the quest for more competitive and efficient working methods in our industries, in our businesses and in our public services. On the road to industrial efficiency we pass a landmark called equal opportunities. And my model manager would have passed it some time ago. Unequal opportunities is a waste we simply can't afford on grounds of efficiency, even if we condoned it — which we don't — on moral grounds.

Barriers to progress

Given that women make up some 51 per cent of the population, the fact that only 10 per cent of managers in this country are women does not strike me as evidence of a balanced deployment of resources. To redress this imbalance, however, and to maximise our industrial efficiency means changes on two fronts — adapting traditional working arrangements to changing realities and influencing traditional views about what those realities are. Two kinds of barriers obstruct progress on those two fronts — organisational barriers and psychological barriers. In *organisational* terms we need to remove artificial obstacles

to the progress of talented employees. These have been created by the rigid practices in employment over things like hours of working, part-time working and leave arrangements, which have obstructed many women who wanted to combine a full career with a family, and who would have been — and this is the point — of great benefit to their employers had they been allowed a measure of flexibility. But at the same time the *psychological* obstacles to the fuller and fairer integration of women in the employment market are long-standing and powerful. We are all, I think, involved in creating and perpetuating ill-founded assumptions about the respective roles of men and women in society. Which makes it difficult for any single force — such as in my area, the Civil Service — to bring about the removal of such psychological pressures.

Recent developments

That said, the barriers *are* being dismantled. And here I acknowledge the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission in providing a continuous critique of the field of employment in this country. My old department the Department of Employment will be producing shortly a comprehensive survey entitled 'Women in Employment: A Lifetime Perspective' which will cover a whole spectrum of factual development and broader issues. But the development I would particularly like to mention is the Equal Opportunities Commission's initiative 'Women into Science and Engieering Year — 1984' (WISE '84). This is a major campaign which will I hope tackle the problem of under-used resources in a vital area, by attracting more girls into scientific and engineering careers.

Private sector employers

Some organisations need no cajoling to exploit under-used resources in this area. I have been particularly impressed with the publicity campaign of Westland Helicopters, the 'Women in Research' programme in GEC, and the support to WISE '84 given by F International. And I am pleased to say that the Civil Service is exploring a number of possibilitiies for participation in WISE '84 and hopes to formulate proposals shortly. There are other promising signs of the growing awareness in organisations that managers need to devise systems which will enable them to retain staff who want to combine career with family responsibilities. Thames Television has a full package of measures which seek to encourage women at all levels to develop their careers and to acquire whatever skills they need to enter male preserves. And the National Westminster Bank has a comprehensive range of career development measures for women, which includes a scheme for selected staff who need a career break, particularly women. But perhaps

I should finish the lighting review of the private sector field with one very eminent example for a good equal opportunities programme — British Gas.

British Gas have made a particularly deep study of the factors which may prevent their managers developing and promoting women staff, and have taken positive steps towards change including more, relevant training of managers *and* women staff, and sponsoring women's networks which enable career minded women to support each other. The networks are, I understand, flourishing and formidably effective pressure groups for women. Each organisation has different circumstances and varying difficulties. We must each tailor our systems to fit our organisational 'figures'. What we have in common is a recognition that waste is unacceptable in whatever form it takes.

The Civil Service

In my areas of ministerial responsibility that recognition is vital. In particular I am closely involved with the push for greater efficiency and value for money in the Civil Service which we have been giving over the last five years. It has been and continues to be our policy to reduce the size of the Civil Service — which has shrunk by some 100,000 posts since 1979, and to bring about more efficient, cost-conscious working methods in every section of that slimmer Service.

The Financial Management Initiative

One of the key weapons at our disposal in pursuing those policies has been the Financial Management Initiative. This is a programme of work covering the whole Service. It aims to give line managers clear aims and targets, to delegate authority to them for achieving those goals, to call them to account for their performance, and to provide better information to senior managers about how effectively the activities for which they are responsible are being handled on the ground. This is an ambitious initiative and one I am wholly committed to. I believe it will help the very many managers across the vast range of activities in the Civil Service to take a more positive role in making the most of their resources.Our initiative is not just about the important issue of finance. It's about management in general. And the new management style will, when we eventually capture it, create a better service to the public.

Personnel Initiative

So the Financial Management Initiative is also really a People Management Initiative. And as a Minister at the Cabinet Office with responsibilities for 'people management' I have been doing many other things to improve the use we make of our staff. Let me give a couple of examples.

Succession planning

We are justly proud that selection for senior posts in the Civil Service is solely on the basis of merit. But we want to strengthen senior management and have improved our systems to ensure that senior managers come from all groups of the Service, not just the traditional policy-orientated high-fliers, and have been given the appropriate experience and training to be expert managers. We introduced systematic succession planning for top posts in 1981. This means that for most top posts we have identified emergency successors, 'next normal' successors, and 'next-but-one' successors. We draw up career plans to ensure that an individual who lacks experience or skill will be given that experience and trained in that skill in good time. This kind of deployment of personnel is vital to the best use of resources.

Efficiency

Another key area where I'm anxious to keep up the pressure is in our efficiency programme. This may be familiar to some of you who follow the coverage of 'Whitehall waste', and you may know that Lord Rayner who was for several years known as the 'scourge of Whitehall' has now been replaced by Sir Robin Ibbs in the role of the Prime Minister's Adviser on Efficiency.

We have in fact achieved savings on £280 million a year and identified £130 million a year worth of savings to come. A lot of our efficiency work involves asking awkward questions about the things we do, why we do them, and how much they cost. One of the vital questions to ask is — are we using our people in the best possible way?

Inefficiency stifles initiative. In the Civil Service papers still pass through a number of hands before reaching their ultimate destination. This is true whether it is a policy paper for ministers or an order for something the department wants to buy. There is a real risk that when someone knows that his work will be checked not just once but several times he will be over-cautious — 'he's paid more than me — let him make the radical decision'. To get the best out of people they have to know what they are responsible for, they have to know that they get the credit when it is due and the kicks when things go wrong. Much of the efficiency programme is geared to identifying these responsibilities and to winkling out the procedures that hinder people from doing the good job they are capable of — and want to do.

I have talked a lot about initiatives across the whole spectrum of management because I want to set our progress on equal opportunities in the Civil Service context. I regard management as an organic whole, a complex of inter-related activities. My recent work to remove some of the organisational barriers facing women in the Service is essentially the

same kind of activity as my work to make senior managers more suitably trained and experienced, to make, for example, the manager of the benefit office freer to run his own show, to make our use of our staff more efficient. It's all about maximising our assets.

The action programme

So let me now come to our work on equal opportunities in the Civil Service.

In 1980 we set up a group of departmental and trade union representatives to look at employment opportunities for women in the Civil Service. We published its report just over a year ago.[1] It identified the need to restructure traditional working patterns; to promote ways of enabling women to progress to senior levels; and to set up mechanisms for monitoring progress. To follow up the report we've agreed with the Civil Service unions an action programme which incorporates the great majority of the report's recommendations.[2]

I hope to see some real progress. The theme of the action programme is for me, at the centre of the Civil Service, to suggest what ought to be done, and for individual managers to bring that about in the way which suits them best. I see it as vital that we at the centre allow managers in departments freedom to move. But as the overseer of equal opportunities across the Service my eyesight will be keen. So I have issued a full policy statement affirming our commitment to equal opportunities and making crystal-clear the responsibilities of those concerned for ensuring that there is full equality of opportunity in the Civil Service. I have asked departments to designate staff in their personnel units as equal opportunity officers to be responsible for co-ordinating that policy and advising the senior management in that department. And we have arranged for unions and management to review jointly the progress we make. These are central controls. But the real transformation must take place at local manager level.

Job sharing/part-time work/flexible working hours

An acid test of our action will be the imagination and flexibility we can bring to bear in the restructuring of work patterns. Traditionally we have thought of a career pattern as being made up necessarily of 40 years' service consisting of 48 weeks each year of 9 to 5 each day. This can of course be inflexible and may well militate against the efficiency of the organisation — since it cuts out from the workforce those able and energetic individuals who cannot for whatever reason discharge

[1] *Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service.* HMSO. 1983
[2] *Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service. Programme of Action.* Cabinet Office (MPO). 1984.

40 years of 48 weeks of 9 to 5. So our programme encourages departments to expand opportunities for part-time work and job-sharing. There has been some early progress in this important area: DHSS have already introduced a job-sharing scheme following our advice. They have received over 600 applications from staff, almost all of which they expect to accept. This will mean that some 300 job-shared posts will be formed across the country in just this one department. It will mean that 600 men or women will be able to keep the momentum of their careers going. They will naturally benefit by this as will DHSS management — they will have 600 fewer able staff dropping out of the system. It is, of course, slightly more costly to employ two part-time rather than one full-time employee, but, against that, the combined commitment and energy of two part-time staff often exceed that of one person working full-time. So I shall be looking out with interest to see what schemes develop in other departments. I have asked departments to discuss with their unions what job-sharing experiments can be introduced. But I was struck by the fact that all the applicants for the DHSS scheme were women and perhaps a little disappointed that none were men.

Another way of adapting the structure of the working day is through flexible working hours. Here the Civil Service is fully up with the game. Flexible working schemes have been operating since the early 70s, and have been increasingly up to the present scale, where the majority of non-industrial civil servants are now covered by flexible working arrangements. This works of course on a voluntary basis.

Maternity and special leave

While we are making more use of part-time work, job-sharing and flexible hours as vehicles for retaining and making the most of trained staff, we also allow up to a full year's absence from work for maternity. We are also encouraging departments to use reinstatement and special leave as much as resources allow to help staff who have to look after families. I should add that all staff in the Civil Service are eligible for reinstatement if they have served the normal qualifying period, and I am particularly anxious that departments should ensure that their staff are made fully aware of the possibilities in those areas. This last point is something I take very seriously. Good management is inseparable from good communication with staff. If managers are to get the best out of staff they must communicate directly and effectively with them, and listen to what they have to say.

Career development of female staff

Flexibility of this sort 'down the line' must take place alongside work 'at the centre' to attack some of the prevailing obstacles hampering the

best use of female staff in the Civil Service. Of course the senior managers in any organisation are of critical importance to that organisation's health and effectiveness. So I am anxious to see more women in senior positions in the Civil Service. I am encouraged by the fact that in the years 1971 to 1981 women did proportionately as well as men in promotion to the fast stream — that is to say, the area from which many senior managers are eventually selected. And our managerial reforms will, I hope, ensure that women do achieve a fuller representation at the top levels than at present. As far as the matter of promotion in general is concerned, our report found that while procedures were designed to be fair and unbiased, there was a lack of information about how they actually worked. So we commissioned further research and hope to have some considered findings this summer.

Promotion studies

As recommended by the Joint Review Group we have commissioned research on two aspects. First, do our reporting and promotion systems treat women fairly? Secondly, do women react differently to the possibility of promotion?

On the first point, our research so far suggests that the system does not discriminate between men and women in judgements on their performance, but there is some difference between judgements in respect of promotion potential. A good deal, but not all, of this difference can be explained by women having shorter service than men. There may be other differences which we have not yet isolated and taken into account Thus, we are trying to establish whether managers who complete staff reports apply different standards to men and women. Do they make assumptions about what women can and cannot do, which are not sustainable?

The other possibility is that women may rule themselves out of promotion, for example by making it clear they are not interested in promotion, that they are less mobile, that they want to give more time to their families. The Personnel Research Unit of City University is looking at this area.

Information

When we have the results of these two studies we will be able to consider what action departments can take to minimise the risk of discrimination, direct or indirect. I would emphasise the importance of sound information about what is going on in this important area. Analytical research into the field will provide managers with indicators of where things are going well or where we are going wrong in our

personnel practices. Our Action Programme has arranged, so far as resources will permit, for management and unions to have at their disposal facts and figures about part-time working, reinstatements, equal opportunity complaints and other key indicators which I hope will be of positive value in their reviews.

Management training

As I mentioned earlier, women who aspire to reach the top may have to surmount psychological, as well as organisational, barriers on the way up. To a certain extent these barriers are part of the way we live, a cultural fact of life which cannot be wiped out simply by the flick of a switch marked 'equal opportunities'. But there are some positive steps we in the Civil Service can take to enable women, who may not have had as good a grooming as men, to fill management positions. At the Civil Service College (for which I'm responsible) we have since 1981 been running a management development course specifically geared to the training needs of women civil servants, at middle management levels.* The course helps the participants to plan personal and career goals and introduces them to assertion training and related interpersonal skills. There is a two-day follow-up workshop six months later which reinforces the progress made earlier. A more recent initiative has been the start of a course for *both* women and men managers as part of training in management development issues. These courses are very popular and have been most successful. I think they have an important part to play.

Child-care

I am also encouraging Civil Service managers to consider carefully and sympathetically proposals for self-financing day care schemes for the children of staff. Within my own department we are taking a new look at the policy and guidance on child-care schemes. We want to make sure that managers and staff know about successful day-care schemes already running — what they have to offer, how they can be made viable, and what stumbling-blocks have to be faced.

Themes

Professor Cary Cooper of Manchester University has written most interestingly about the additional stresses and burdens borne by female executives. Women who have wanted a challenging career in addition to a family life have had to hold their own — and more — at work. But they also had to fight hard to manage a home and family at the same

* See Management Training for Women by Pauline Glucklich, page 104.

time. Career women have had to roll the boulder up to the top of the mountain — pushing a pram at the same time!

Professor Cooper suggests that in order to stay 'upright' professional women have adopted certain survival techniques at work and at home. These include: first, deciding precisely what targets are really important and worth achieving, and selecting those which are realistically achievable; secondly, finding out what resources are available and improving them if that is possible; thirdly, delegating as much as possible down the line, so enabling the workload to be handled more efficiently and letting staff 'grow' with their greater responsibilities; and finally, chasing those targets with as much energy and commitment as possible.

These survival techniques seem to me a pretty good list of priorities for any modern manager, and if we can acquire them, then the trials of the female executives will not have been in vain. So I'd like to close with an appeal to all managers, managers in the Civil Service, managers of the arts, managers in the public sector, and managers across the whole economy. I am not crusading. I am stating facts. I appeal to you to maximise your assets. You and your organisation are as good as your staff, the men *and* the women. So you will need to recruit the best talent you can afford. Work out what their place in the organisation is now and will probably be in the future. Plan their career development and training. Assess their needs as individuals with private lives to lead and responsibilities to handle — but, most important, handle them as talent to be used to the full and investment to be repaid. Remember that investment is huge and worth handling with great care. And give your managers as much authority as possible in handling those resources to the best of their abilities. If we can achieve that, then the benefit to all of us will be immeasurable.

The Civil Service College: What It Is and What It Is Not

N E A Moore

Noel Moore has been Principal of the Civil Service College since September 1981. He joined the Civil Service in 1952 after graduating at Cambridge University and has served in three departments: the Post Office, the Treasury and the Civil Service Department. He was Secretary of the Decimal Currency Board from 1966 to 1972 and since then has filled a variety of posts concerned with management services, control of manpower and administrative expenditure, personnel management, policy on retirement, conduct and discipline, and the pay and conditions of industrial civil servants.

In the academic year ending August 1983 some 20,600 students attended courses at, or organised by, the Civil Service College — a figure which must seem staggeringly large to most of those familiar with other training institutions. Over 19,000 of these students were civil servants; the rest were from a wide range of public and private sector bodies. The civil servants came from all departments and from all specialisms — statisticians, economists, lawyers, doctors, scientists and engineers as well as general administrators — and their grade levels ranged from Clerical Officer to Permanent Secretary. There were 1,000 courses with over 300 different titles. The average course length was about 4½ days but some civil servants attended only 1-day seminars whilst others attended 6-week courses. Most of the courses were held at one of the College's two training centres: the residential centre at Sunningdale or the non-residential centre in Belgrave Road, London. Some courses were run on departmental premises in different parts of Britain and some were held in other establishments under special sponsorship arrangements — for

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example in selected polytechnics for British Computer Society examinations and some audit work and in Leeds University and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology for 'total immersion' language teaching in French and German. The subjects covered were also very diverse as will be clear from what follows.

The Civil Service College Centre in Belgrave Road, London.

The above description illustrates the central fact about the Civil Service College: to quote the 1974 Report of a study carried out by Mr Neville Heaton, a retired Deputy Secretary, and Mr Leslie Williams, former Secretary General of the National Staff Side, 'it was proposed by the Fulton Committee, and accepted by two successive Governments, that it (the College) should be a large scale and broad based insitution. As such, it has been expected to provide a very widely assorted range of courses, more varied probably than that of any comparable institution in the country... All this for a very large and constantly changing body of trainees of very widely varying abilities, experience and degrees of commitment and enthusiasm.' Despite a thorough-going management review of the College in 1976 and a considerable switch of emphasis in the teaching, to reflect changing priorities, the basic situation remains the same in 1984, ten years after the Heaton/Williams Report: the College has a diverse role, and comparisons with other training and educational institutions, either in this country or overseas, can be misleading.

The College is sometimes referred to as the 'Civil Service Staff College' or the 'Civil Service Management College'. The first of these

labels is incorrect; the second is incomplete. The expression 'staff college' suggests an organisation (like the Army Staff College) which members of a specific profession who show high promise attend at a certain stage in their careers and where they are expected to 'pass' a long course before qualifying for promotion. The suggestion has sometimes been made that the College should be a staff college in this sense but the decision has always gone the other way. The College is not, and never has been, an 'elitist' organisation dealing only with a small group of high fliers. (Even the AT/HEOD) 'fast-stream' training accounted for only 3,300 student days in 1982-83 out of a total of 72,000 student days.) Nor does the College in general issue certificates or diplomas or award 'passes'. Naturally, we attract people who are expected to go further in their careers but very little of the training is mandatory. The Civil Service is a very broad based profession; work varies greatly from department to department; and it makes little sense to try to 'prescribe' one long central course which is equally suitable for students at a given level from all departments. The recent decision for a mandatory central course for all new entrants to the Open Structure (that is Under Secretary level and above or about 1 in 1,000 of all civil service posts) does not invalidate this statement. Indeed, it confirms it; Under Secretary is arguably the first level in the hierarchy where there is sufficient commonality of job specification and training need to make a mandatory uniform course feasible.

Even the expression 'management college' is misleading. A lot of College teaching *is* management training but many courses are designed to provide further professional training for specialists — training which is not available from other training institutions.

The role of organisations is often determined in part by their history. This is true of the College, whose history helps to explain its diversity of role. Although the College was founded only 1969, there were central training courses long before that date. The College can be regarded as the bringing together, and the further development, of three existing organisations, each of which had its own strong traditions. The first was the Centre for Administrative Studies (CAS), which was set up in 1963 to provide extended training for Assistant Principals (the fast-stream entry) but which later expanded to provide training courses for Principals and other grades in mid-career. The second was the Training and Education Division of the Treasury, for which the Director of CAS eventually became responsible, and which provided management or developmental training courses for Assistant Secretaries and some more junior grades. The third was the long-established and well-respected Specialised Training Wing of the Treasury Management Services Division, which provided training in

computers and management services. The report on the Civil Service by the Committee of Inquiry chaired by Lord Fulton (1966-68) gave a fresh impetus to central management in the Civil Service. The setting up of the Civil Service Department and the College was announced by the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Harold Wilson MP (later Lord Wilson), when the Fulton Report was published and was the direct result of its recommendations. A new emphasis and coherence was given to central training, which gradually expanded to cover more subjects and more grade levels.

Having explained what the College is not, and how its antecedents helped determine its role, I must now attempt to describe what it is. I think it is helpful to begin by putting it in the broader context of Civil Service training, most of which is done by government departments for their own staff. Almost all departments have at least one training centre; some have several; a few have many. And some training is provided for departments by outside training organisations such as local training colleges, polytechnics and business schools. The College provides only about five per cent of total training (measured in trainee days). Its aim is to improve the work performance of civil servants and to develop their potential to fill other and more senior posts by providing, to the satisfaction of government departments, that training which is best provided centrally within the Civil Service. The College and departments do not compete with one another; the College and departmental training units can be seen as part of one huge in-house training institution with the College tackling that training which is more effectively or economically done centrally. And this inevitably means that the College finds itself running not long, frequently repeated courses but specialist or senior courses with a relatively small studentship and limited repeats. The borderline between what is done at the College and by departments is under constant review. Moreover, the division of responsibilities which is right for a large department such as the Ministry of Defence is not necessarily appropriate for a small department such as the Department of Energy. It is unreasonable to expect that departmental attendance at the College will necessarily be related to the size of departments.

Because civil service work at any one level varies greatly according to the role of the department, very little induction training is carried out at the College. The important exception is the training for the small group of fast-stream entrants (those high quality graduates or internal candidates of comparable intellectual and personal qualities who come in as Administration Trainees.) This training is provided in short 'modules' spread over some four or five years and amounts in total to 22 weeks. The College also runs introductory courses for specialist

graduates to familiarise them with the general context of government work. For all these staff, who may rise high in the Civil Service and not spend their whole careers in one department, a broad appreciation of government work, set in an appropriate intellectual framework, is important. The College is able to provide the necessary specialist staff and to illustrate points with practical examples from a number of departments.

The great bulk of College training, however, is not induction but mid-career training — designed to give civil servants with several years of work experience the knowledge and skills which will help them to work better either in their present or future jobs. Again, much mid-career training is given by departments. The College concentrates on subjects which are relevant to all or most departments or which are of such a specialised nature that the skilled people needed to do the training are most easily and economically assembled at the centre. In the first category are courses in a wide range of topics: policy formulation, law and the administrator, international and European Community work, social policy, negotiating and consultancy skills, personnel management, industrial relations, organisational change, financial management, basic quantitative skills, and appreciation courses for generalists in economics, information technology or investment appraisal. In the second category, which overlaps with the first, are courses to extend or relate to distinctive civil service problems the professional knowledge of economists, statisticians, operational research specialists, accountants and auditors and various computer and management services experts.

Most departmental training is probably about training for the present job; the College also does relevant job training but there is greater emphasis on developmental training — preparing staff for different and more senior jobs. Although the College attaches great importance to practice rather than theory, rather greater attention is given to the wider context of work, and the College is able to use its central position to bring together staff from a number of different departments to exchange ideas and experiences and to give them the opportunity of meeting people who are tackling similar problems in other sectors of the economy. One of the College's sub-aims is to promote better understanding within the Civil Service of the work and management methods of colleagues, not only in other walks of life in Britain but also in government work in other countries. There is a range of reciprocal training courses, for example, which are run in association with comparable training organisations in France, Germany and The Netherlands and which enable civil servants to learn about the method of government in those countries, to meet opposite numbers and to improve their understanding of the languages. The College is also able

to bring together civil service generalist administrators with colleagues in other specialisms (scientists, engineers, lawyers, doctors, etc) thus helping to improve understanding and co-operation between them and to enable specialists who so wish to move into non-specialist areas of work.

An important feature of College work is the mounting of short seminars at senior levels (Under Secretary and Assistant Secretary) to provide a forum for discussion of current policy or management issues or to give a quick appreciation of new developments which could help them in their work. Occasionally seminars are arranged at more senior levels, sometimes jointly with other bodies — for example, an appreciation course in information technology, jointly with the London Business School, for Permanent and Deputy Secretaries. It is quite wrong to regard the College as somehow 'down-market' and not suitable for the training of senior staff.

Greater attention is likely to be given in the future to the mid-career training of those expected to reach the most senior levels in the Civil Service. The new Under Secretary course cannot be complete in itself. Part of career planning must be the identification of formal training as well as the giving of suitable work postings. The College runs a range of courses well suited — but not confined — to high-fliers. Few courses at present are mandatory across the Civil Service, although departments often send staff on courses which their grade managers believe will help them. But there is a modular Senior Finance Course which from 1983 has been compulsory for all officers appointed to the post of Principal Finance Officer.

There are three main influences on the College programme: first, the training needs of departments; second, the current priorities of ministers and of the central departments (Treasury and Cabinet Office) in relation to civil service management and, third, ideas which the College itself generates based on its wide contacts with other training institutions. Close liaison with departments and with these other institutions is a fundamental part of College work. Links are particularly close with Departmental Training Officers, a number of whom serve on a College Consultancy Committee.

Government departments are not tied to the College. They can buy their mid-career training from other outside institutions if they so wish. (And with the College's move to repayment, they already have to pay fees for about half the College's courses.) But the range of College courses is so wide that there are few, if any, subjects or grade levels for which it is necessary to look for courses elsewhere. College courses focus on the often distinctive problems of government and departments will normally 'go outside' only when they attach less importance to this

immediate job relevance than to the prospect of their students working alongside a majority of students from outside the Civil Service.

Although College staff spend most of their time organising and running courses or doing the detailed research and case studies which are essential preparation for them, they are occasionally able to give departments help and advice on their own training problems on a consultancy basis. But the most obvious direct assistance which the College gives to other departments is in the courses which it runs for departmental trainers. Not all training staff in departments attend College courses but many do. The College has a group of training experts, most of whom have had experience in departmental training establishments, and their work is supported by a Training Resources Centre. There is close association with the Cabinet Office (MPO) Training Division about the use within the Civil Service of new training techniques.

There have been suggestions that, because the College has so many different roles, there is a risk that it fills none of them well. I do not accept this. Admittedly, management of the College is a formidable task and the College Management Group sometimes faces seemingly intransigent problems. But the existence of conflicting objectives which have to be kept in balance is not an unfamiliar situation in Government, and I do not believe the College is failing to maintain such a balance.

There are features of the College which would be the envy of any training institution. Not least is the strength of its 'faculty'. The strength of any teaching institution lies in the quality of its staff. There are between 90 and 100 College teaching staff and they come from varied backgrounds. Some have joined the College from universities or polytechnics. Some have come from industry and commerce. A majority come to the College on loan from other government departments where they will have had practical experience relevant to the subjects they teach and to which they will return after perhaps three to five years. Most are at Principal and Senior Executive Officer levels. All serving civil servants who come to the College are specially selected by interview from a Service-wide 'trawl': a spell at the College is never a routine posting. Because the College's role is such a diverse one, the qualifications which the teaching staff need are also very varied. A number have several degrees or professional qualifications; all have experience either of work in the Civil Service and elsewhere or of teaching in other higher training institutions. Several have done important pieces of research and have published work in books or learned periodicals.

However, the College is not a group of civil servants teaching other civil servants. About half the teaching sessions are given not by College

staff but by outsiders. Some of these, of course, are civil servants but most are not, and through its wide network of contacts the College can draw on speakers from many walks of life: ministers, MPs, prominent academics, journalists and political commentators, trade unionists, top executives from industry and commerce and other parts of the public sector such as nationalised industries and local authorities. The list of outside speakers is by any standards impressive.

The College cannot 'freeze' its programme. The pattern of training courses is never the same for two consecutive years. The current Government emphasis on the importance of effective and efficient management provides it with a splendid opportunity. Student days in 1982-83 were up by 18 per cent on the previous year. Courses are shorter than they were, more intensive and more practically orientated. Anyone who elects to go to the College for 'a rest from real work' is likely to get a shock. The Civil Service is over 100,000 smaller than it was in 1979. A smaller Service has to be a better trained Service; there is no room for 'passengers'. The College, in all its varied roles, has a more assured future than ever before.

Management Training for Women

Mrs P Glucklich

Pauline Glucklich, a Senior Lecturer at the Civil Service College, is the designer and director of the course for women managers, 'Developing Skills for Women in Middle Management'. Before joining the Civil Service College, she spent four years as a Research Officer at the London School of Economics, working on a research project into the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in a number of UK organisations.

The notion of a women-only management course has aroused much curiosity, some controversy and in some quarters resistance. There also seems to be a lack of understanding as to why such a course should be necessary. Yet two and a half years after its initiation into the 1981 programme at the Civil Service College, the course continues to attract a large number of applications and to provide a stimulating and supportive form of management training for women. Nearly 400 managers, from HEO to Principal level and equivalent grades, have now attended this course during the two and a half years in which it has been running.

In this article I set out the rationale for the course, consider its effectiveness to date, and briefly point to some of the implications of this kind of training, in the wider context of management and career development.

Course rationale and design

The curiosity and resistance which the notion of a women-only course engenders is in part caused by a lack of understanding as to why such a course should be necessary, why women should be treated differently from men in the context of management training, and a failure to understand why such a course is lawful under the terms of 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. On more than one occasion I have heard the view expressed that to hold such a course is unnecessary, and patronising, indicating that women are not only different from men but that they are in need of 'special treatment', are indeed 'suitable cases for treatment'. There is some substance to such views, but only some. For it is true that women are different, different from men in the kinds of jobs they do and in their distribution within employment organisations and, in this, their distribution within the Civil Service, laterally and vertically within grades and functions, is similar to that found nationally.

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*'*Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service.* A report by the Joint Review Group on Employment Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service. Management and Personnel Office HMSO 1982. Page 2.

As the Joint Review Group pointed out in its report* 'women continue to predominate in particular sectors of employment and in the lower grade hierarchies, and are only a tiny minority in senior levels of management, and in some professional and specialist areas'. Currently, in the Civil Service, less than 10 per cent of those in middle management grades (HEO to Principal and equivalent grades) are women, despite the fact that in recent years large numbers of women have been recruited into the Service, and despite an equal opportunity policy of many years standing. Whilst there are a number of possible explanations as to why this might be so, the fact is that most women do have different career patterns from men; many women do not have the same experience, skills, continuity of service; and in some cases levels of confidence, as their male counterparts.

The course is therefore designed to help those women about to enter, or already in middle management, on the basis that there are certain areas of management training which are particularly relevant to a woman manager at this stage of her career. From its conception, it was intended that, above all, this course should provide a positive contribution to the civil service equal opportunity policy for women. Moreover this kind of training is in line with national policy; section 48(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act makes provision for this kind of training, where the total number of women doing the kind of work for which training is being offered, is 'comparatively small'.

The second reason for the initiation of this course was a hope that the nature of an all-women course would provide a different and more supportive learning environment than that experienced in mixed group training, where women are mostly in the minority at middle management levels. Research evidence* suggests that where women form a minority in training they can be at a disadvantage, and that in an all-women group the support provided, and the lack of competition and sex-stereotyping, often found in mixed group training, can help women to learn more effectively.

The principal assumptions, therefore, on which the course is based, are that where women form a minority group, as in middle management and above, their differential treatment in training, at a particular point in their careers, can be beneficial as a way of enabling them to acquire new skills, by helping them to move further in middle and senior levels of management, and that the nature of an all-women environment can in itself be a more effective learning mechanism.

The course is primarily one of management development. Its specific objectives are to help women plan personal and career goals, to

*Single Sex Management Training. A Personal View. Sandra Langrith. *Women and Training News*. Issue 1/Winter 1980.

introduce them to assertion training[1] and a range of interpersonal skills related to their personal effectiveness and power, and for the course itself to form the basis of a support group. In the first part of the course the focus is on the individual as an effective manager, developing personal and interpersonal skills. Subsequently the focus shifts to the organisation and the manager's role in introducing and achieving change within that environment. On the fifth day of the course, the two themes are brought together in an action-planning session. Participants are encouraged to draw up long-, medium- and short-term plans in relation to their personal and professional lives. Subsidiary themes, related to the role and relationships of a woman manager at work, and to the management of work and family life, are also woven into the five-day course. Six months after the week's course, a two and a half day follow-up workshop is held in order to re-inforce and build on initial learning and support. Most of the work is carried out in small groups. Establishing relationships, trust, and building rapport between group members is considered important as a way of enabling participants to feel comfortable in trying out new skills, and to more easily receive constructive feed-back on their behaviour. The development of group support is encouraged not only as an aid to learning, but also as a way of providing longer-term support and introducing participants to the notion of support systems and networking.

Considering the effectiveness of the course

Two and a half years after its inception, is there any evidence to suggest that the initial propositions upon which the course was based were well-founded? Clearly it is too early to say to what extent this course has or can, contribute to bringing more women into middle management grades and above. A long-term follow-up study would need to be undertaken and, in any event, this would be a difficult area to isolate and evaluate. But in the short term, in terms of helping women to acquire certain kinds of skills, there is some evidence of success. An evaluation study of the course[2] shows that participants saw the course as 'having been relevant to their subsequent job requirement and having developed their management skills.'

Richard Williams, who carried out the study, points to the main benefits

[1] Assertion training is concerned with training individuals to express their beliefs, feelings and wants in a direct, open and honest manner but in a way which is appropriate to the situation. It also involves enabling people to stand up for themselves but remain responsive to the needs and rights of other people.

[2] *Developing Skills for Women in Middle Management*: Final report on course evaluation, Richard J Williams. Management and Personnel Office. August 1983. In this evaluation study, Richard Williams considered participants pre-course expectations, their immediate end-of-course reactions, and attempted to evaluate its longer term benefits by interviewing participants and senior officers a year after the course.

which participants felt the course had provided, both in the long and short term. These were:

> 'an increase in self-confidence, a better understanding of self (feelings, behaviour and role) and understanding of others; training in assertion skills, (this was the most frequently mentioned area of benefit); a clearer sense of career direction and enhanced commitment, and reassurance gained through the exchange and sharing of others' experience'.

Many spoke of having had a boost to their morale when they considered its benefits.

Although such benefits might be expected to accrue from any well-designed management course geared to the acquisition of management skills, the evaluation study also provides some support for the 'special needs' argument — that is, that there are some areas of management development training which are particularly relevant to women about to enter or already in middle management. An analysis of participants' pre-course expectations indicated that apart from improving managerial effectiveness, understanding the role of the woman as a middle manager was considered important. Other training needs frequently mentioned were the need to improve interpersonal skills — both formal skills such as presentation, negotiation and committee work, as well as those of assertion and increased confidence. The opportunity to consider career development and planning was also a strong attraction. Comments from participants illustrate some of these points:

> 'I hope the course will (1) make me a better manager, (2) make me better able to cope with my job as a manager and my role as a wife and mother, and (3) help me deal with the prejudices that one continually comes up against as a woman in a male dominated Civil Service.'
>
> 'In the short term, I am hoping that it will affect my control of staff. In the long term it may enable me to aim at a realistic and practical career structure rather than merely taking opportunities as and when they arise.'
>
> 'It is important for me to improve professionally my managerial skills, and as a career woman with a young family, be able to (a) integrate the two aspects, (b) advise others in similar situations, and (c) be more understanding, competent and effective as a person and a manager.'

The fact that the course was for women only was also strongly endorsed by participants who felt that it did provide a supportive atmosphere which enhanced learning. Most of those who attended

found that an all woman environment did 'contribute significantly to learning, compared to mixed courses, mainly through the greater honesty, trust and openness of course members, as well as providing a more supportive atmosphere'.

Similarly, my own analysis of the reasons why people choose to apply for the course, shows that for many women, the fact that the course is for women only is a major attraction.

Many come because they wish to consider issues specifically related to being a woman in management. These range from those who wish to gain a greater understanding of the problems encountered by women in management and ways of dealing with them, to curiosity about why it should be necessary to hold a course for women only. The following comments crystallise the views of many:

> 'A greater awareness of the problems encountered by women in management which will enable me to analyse my own career, and the skills needed to become an effective manager, particularly how to overcome the traditional attitudes towards women held by some colleagues, which prevent effective management.'
>
> 'A knowledge of how other women deal with the problems of working in an environment which has a bulk percentage of men in posts.'
>
> 'I want to take advantage of a course designed for women managers, so that I can compare and contrast it to other courses I've attended where I've been in the minority.'
>
> 'I am intrigued by the proposition that women as a species merit a special course in management skills, and would be very interested in the views of other women on the subject.'

But what of the critics who ask what happens to the newly acquired skills in the 'real' working world of men and women and away from the supportive training environment of an all women group? and of those who ask whether such a course, held with a mixed group of men and women, would not be equally successful?

In relation to the first question, it is worth noting that the training environment is not the 'real world', whether comprised of single sex or mixed sex groups. No doubt, as with all management courses, there is a transfer of learning problem. But the fact that a follow-up course is held six months after the initial course, when action plans and previous learning are reviewed and re-inforced, helps to minimise this. So does the fact that networking amongst group members is encouraged. Participants are asked to consider how they successfully learn new skills, and to identify transfer of learning problems.

Whether such a course held with a mixed group population would be

equally successful is open to question. Clearly it would be different in objectives and design. Recently I have introduced into the College programme a course called Men and Women Managers, which makes available to both men and women training similar to that initiated for women managers. Its objective is to increase personal and managerial effectiveness by examining ways in which women and men can work together more effectively. It involves training in interpersonal skills (for example assertion, personal effectiveness, communication and handling conflict), similar to the kind of training carried out on the women's course. It is too early to say whether this course will attract the high level of applications or be as successful as the women's course. But it is there as an option for those women who wish to train in a mixed group environment, and for men, who wish to acquire certain kinds of skills in the context of women and men working together more effectively.

Conclusions and implications

If this course is an effective way of helping women's personal and career development, and of bringing more women into middle management and above, then clearly there is scope for extending it to those in the lower grades. For it is at these levels that women are most heavily congregated. For example: although 61 per cent of Clerical Officers are women, this proportion falls to 27 per cent at EO level, and a further 15 per cent, to 12 per cent, at HEO level.[1] A recommendation that departments consider the possibilities of introducing courses similar to those held at the College is included in the Equal Opportunity Programme of Action, issued recently by MPO.[2] As an effective method of training and as a positive contribution to women's career development within departments, it is clearly a worthwhile consideration.

Moreover, it is worth noting that although the College course is the only training of its kind to be provided by an employer for its women employees on a regular basis, there has been increasing interest by employers and teaching institutions in single sex training as a management development tool for women. In the last two to three years a number of employers and industry groups have sponsored and supported courses organised by various academic institutions. For example, the City University, with sponsorship from the National Westminster Bank, has been running an annual programme for senior women managers for the last two years. In 1981, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) started a management development programme, initially for women managers in

[1] *Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service. Table 2, page 12.*

[2] *Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service. Programme of Action.* Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office) 1984.

the cotton and clothing industries, subsequently extended to women from a wide range of backgrounds. More recently Aston University and Gloucester College of Art and Technology have pioneered thirteen-week programmes designed to bring women into management. And in May of last year, the Commonwealth Secretariat sponsored a course, based on the design of the College's course, for senior women managers in East Africa, which was held in Tanzania. Where evaluation studies of these programmes have been carried out, they show similar results, in benefits and support, to those perceived by women civil servants.

Yet as a contribution to the Civil Service's equal opportunity policy for women, this course is currently an isolated response within the training function. If it is to be effective over a longer term, it needs to be complemented by other measures and co-ordinated within a wider framework of management and career development for women at departmental level and national levels. For example, more support and follow-up work could be given to women when they return to their departments, and encouragement given to aid further their personal and career development. This raises questions as to how such approaches can be co-ordinated within the wider context of management development policies for both women and men at departmental and national levels.

A review of staff development completed recently by MPO,[1] in making a number of recommendations on management development including career management and training, urges departments to think through those policies and make them known to staff, to 'provide them with a clear idea of where they stand, what they may expect and what they can do to further their own career development'. Such recommendations, if considered alongside those contained in the Equal Opportunity Programme of Action,[2] now being considered by departments, would provide a sound base for action. For if there is to be any shift in the numbers of women moving into first line, middle and senior management, grades, a more co-ordinated approach will be required over a much wider area of personnel management and career development policies.

[1] *Civil Service Management Development in the 1980s.* Management and Personnel Office 1983.
[2] Op cit.

The Impact of Information Technology

Ms E Conn

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Introduction

Information Technology (IT) has already made its mark. As members of the public, we are conscious of its use in banks, building societies, and travel agents. Many other changes have come about, out of the public view, in other organisations.

The Civil Service is no exception to this general trend. IT has made an impact here too — just think of driving licences, social security books, or ERNIE! By the end of the century, the work of all civil servants will be affected by IT. Many will use it as a matter of routine in the course of their work. Indeed, it has been estimated that the number of communicating computer terminals in administrative government will rise to about 100,000 by 1992; that is one terminal to every five or six civil servants.

IT offers significant potential benefits; and the introduction of new systems will therefore continue. Indeed, we can expect the rate of change

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to increase as the cost of equipment falls and its potential uses increase. But these changes will not come about easily. There is always some resistance to change, and the introduction of IT will be no exception. But if we can persist with efforts to manage its introduction in such a way as to seize all the opportunities it offers, and to resolve the problems that it might bring, we can also ensure that we realise its full benefits both for the Civil Service as a whole and for the staff working within it. This article is concerned with the management of that change.

IT turbulence

Shortly after I joined the Central Computer Agency in 1979, it was reorganised and became the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA). When I left in the early part of 1984 it was about to be reorganised following the review by Paul Freeman, its Director. These reorganisations are connected with the turbulent nature of information technology. The technology makes rapid and big strides, and constantly affects IT products on the market and what they can offer users. This in turn makes organisations change their perceptions of the use of IT, and this changes their organisation, and sometimes their business. But, interestingly, throughout this spectrum — from the technology to the end use —there is a marked decreasing pace of change. Products do not change as fast or as much as the technology, and the full use of these products proves to be slower still.

Applying inventions

What does this show? That, as has been evident throughout history, inventions are one thing; their successful incorporation into daily use is another and more tortuous process. It requires widespread cultural change, including organisational change. It is this aspect, as it concerns the Civil Service, which has been my main preoccupation during my time in CCTA and on which this article dwells.

For a long time, the Civil Service has paid attention to the need to get good value from office equipment. The former Civil Service Department spearheaded a number of exploratory investigations into the uses and impact of new types of machine. This tradition provided an excellent basis for meeting the challenges of the new forms of IT for use in the office. For example, in the late 1970s, trials of word processors produced valuable evidence of the way in which they could best be introduced, managed and used.

This work was brought together in the CCTA in 1980 to form the Office Technology Group (subsequently located within the Future Applications Division), which was responsible for 'New Technology' and 'Office Automation'. (The ambiguity of these phrases was, and is, a reflection of the fuzzy perception of the issues they represent.) There were two main

developments at the time which marked a watershed. IT was already changing the nature of office machines, making them computers in disguise. And, as a consequence, computers were becoming available to staff at all levels outside the computer specialism.

Benefits of exploration

The word processor trials had already shown the wide range of matters which needed to be tackled by management, if the machines were to be used effectively and managed well. Few were typical technical questions; all were related to work organisation, personnel management, or wider organisational matters. But the trials had provided realistic information on which to produce plans to deal with them. In the long established tradition of Whitleyism in the Civil Service, the trade union concerned (CPSA) had been closely involved in the trials. This meant that the discussions about the action needed were informed and constructive. Although not all the problems could be foreseen, the changes which were made and the guidance which was produced as a result of the trials and of the discussions with the unions provided a relatively stable environment for the introduction of word processors into the typing area of the Civil Service.

Managing change

The need to find a means to provide some stability which does not stifle progress is, in my view, an important aspect of getting new forms of technology into daily use in large organisations. Constant change is counter-productive. But, neither is it any good delaying the introduction of new machines until all the problems are solved, or trying to devise long-lasting solutions before the problems are properly understood.

Organisational and human change need to be positively managed in steps; no such constraint impedes inventions. But the organisation and human issues can be managed well. This can reduce the time gap inherent in transferring the technology into use; delays which are caused by the differences between technological change and cultural change. What we need to do is to base our organisational planning and management on a better understanding of the impact of the technology. And we need to use IT to get that understanding.

Evaluation of the impact of IT

It is tempting to jump to conclusions about the impact of IT and the cause of it. But, observing a simple sequence of events does not establish cause and effect. To establish the real cause and effect, and thus provide relevant and reliable information for planning and decision making, it is essential to follow a disciplined approach to evaluating the impact of early uses of new forms of IT. To meet this need, CCTA has, in

close association with departments, developed a method to evaluate the impact of IT in the office. This provides a range of techniques, and advice about their application, which are designed to extract relevant and useful information about the experience of departments in using office technology systems.

A similar approach to evaluation is being taken in the Office Automation Pilots Scheme which is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This is recognition that it is critical also for IT suppliers to understand the impact and use of the products so that their product development can adequately match user requirements. There is close co-operation in this area between DTI and CCTA.

Information about the real impact of IT is an important contribution to planning and managing office technology projects; and to a departmental IT steering committee in its consideration of the wider issues raised for the department' organisation, information, and staff management as well as for the development of its IT strategy. Also, the trends and patterns revealed by considering the impact in departments generally, provide a realistic basis for the CCTA, other Treasury divisions and the MPO, together with departments, to consider the changes (both interim ones and longer ones) which will be needed for the Service as a whole. Departmental Trade Union Sides and the Council for Civil Service Unions (CSSU), for the same reasons, also find the information of value. The regular discussions between the CCTA and CCSU are significantly enhanced by the realistic base provided by the disciplined gathering of information about the impact of IT in the office.

But evaluation of the impact of selected projects is only one part of the story. This can be usefully complemented, for example, by small sample surveys of the impact of particular types of application, by departments themselves and by the CCTA. A brief survey of microcomputer uses, reported in the January edition of *CCTA News*, is an example of a low-cost approach which provides valuable information to ease the incorporation of IT into daily organisational life. No doubt, other economic methods of extracting relevant information, and for developing understanding, about the impact of IT will be developed as IT is introduced more widely.

Sharing information

Because of the federal structure of the Civil Service, it is essential to find effective means of sharing experiences and understanding across departments about the best ways to manage IT and the changes it brings, and to make good use of similar experiences elsewhere. Close contact is maintained by CCTA with leading organisations, in particular in the UK, Europe and North America.

To be effective in sharing information in the Civil Service, there needs to be a swift process to handle it. IT itself will play an increasing role in this. In the meantime, some successful interdepartmental groups have been initiated by the CCTA to bring together those in the Civil Service who are leading in the application of IT and experiencing the growing pains. The groups most relevant to the wider issues of IT in the office now cover: microcomputers, reprographics, micrographics, viewdata, secretarial and typing systems, and management-aid systems. They have proved very useful, bringing together communities of experienced staff with mutual interests. They provide an economic and swift means to share information betweeen the centre and the operating departments, and between departments themselves; to stimulate new ideas about potential uses; and to produce an informed community able to help in developing solutions to the problems which need to be solved on behalf of the Civil Service as a whole.

As IT products and their uses develop over the years, these groups will need to change too. The distinctions between some of the products have already blurred and will eventually disappear. But there will always be distinctions of some sort which are useful for manageing the work. The key thing is to be alert to the need for change and to seek the changes which provide some temporary stability.

The office kaleidoscope

The ever-changing nature of the products, and the changing perceptions of their uses and implications, and the volatility of users' perception of their requirements, makes it difficult for suppliers and users to pin it all down for practical purposes. The Office Technology Group has tackled this by looking at three interlocking parts of the kaleodoscope. These are: the systems which support administrative services; systems which support managers and professionals; and systems which support the delivery of information.

The current occupational and grading structure of the Civil Service reflects previous technology developments in office machines. Thus, in the administrative support services, there are separate categories for the management and operation of machines used for distinct (until now) parts of the information handling process; typing, reprographics, and data processing are the main examples. The remainder of the administrative support processes such as arranging meetings, distributing documents, filing, archiving, retrieving papers and information, have developed without, except for telephones, the benefit of advanced machines. A key to speeding up the successful introduction of IT into this large and heterogeneous activity, is to identify relatively homogeneous functions, to clarify their requirements, and to work out a

sensible process for adapting the current methods and organisation to the use of IT. Such homogeneous areas include (in addition to the services which are already significantly assisted by machines): registries, records management more generally, document tracking, stock control, personnel records, financial records, training, private offices of ministers and top management, press offices, and internal library services. The interaction between IT used to support these types of administrative processes on the one hand, and the operational data processing activity in offices, particularly local offices, on the other is an important area for investigation.

Many of these administrative activities directly support managers and the decision making process, and indeed this is an illustration of the interlocking nature of the different parts of the office kaleidoscope. But decision making involves also other, less structured and less clearly understood, processes in its use of information. Here the application of old and new IT is in its infancy.

The third, interlocking part of the kaleidoscope is the use of IT to deliver information to staff throughout the organisation and at all levels. The facilities used could include electronic mail, text and document distribution, voice messaging, viewdata and other means of access to internal and external text and data bases. Because of the interaction of the information delivery process with those processes involved in supporting administrative services and decision making, it is a complex business to start introducing IT here, even were all the technical problems solved. Both management support systems and information delivery services raise difficult questions about the role and management of information which must be tackled to manage effectively the use of IT.

Across the whole kaleidoscope, a great deal of ground work has been done both by CCTA and departments themselves. The work includes identifying the new kinds of products which appear to offer significant potential for benefits, testing their use and impact in practice, initiating studies to stimulate and identify new types of requirements, and promoting awareness of both the potential of the machines and their wide ranging implications for current management policies, Civil Service structure and working practices. *CCTA News* has carried, since it started, a number of articles emanating from this work, which give an indication of the breadth of new forms of IT in the office even now. In addition to this useful medium for communicating information on the new forms of IT in the office, the 'IT in the Civil Service' series of documents published by CCTA, and all the other forms of communication within the Civil Service, have been utilised to spread the messages derived from the work so far.

Next leap forward

The current generation of IT products in the office tends to be used for relatively discrete operational and administrative support tasks. And there is still a long way to go to utilise fully what they can offer. The CCTA's work, on stimulating the cross-fertilisation of experience and ideas in the Service, will help to speed up the process of identifying good applications and the organisational changes (some of which may be major changes) needed to use them. In parallel, however, the next leap forward is already happening. This is to build on the administrative-support IT base to tackle much more difficult questions about the role and use of information itself.

Quite apart from the impetus maintained by the IT suppliers in developing new products and facilities, the drive for better financial management in the Service is stimulating a demand for help which only IT can give. Managers and policy makers at all levels need to be able to have efficient systems at their finger tips which will give reliable and timely information which is relevant to the decisions they have to take.

Wisdom

But herein lies a problem. As T S Eliott said:

> 'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?'
>
> (Choruses from 'The Rock')

To make IT serve us, and not dominate us, we need to keep clearly in mind that our goal is wisdom — good decision making — and that more information is not necessarily a good thing. To those who have lived through the history of introducing data processing this is probably old hat. But the long recognised problems raised in ensuring that large computer centres serve real needs are a warning that, in the application of IT to daily life and not just in specialist centres, these problems will be multiplied and take on new forms. To add to data cemeteries, we might have information pollution. We need to do our best to minimise this.

IT and the information process

The oft-quoted justification for investing in IT to support decision makers is that it reduces inefficiency (eg reduces interruptions, provides more time to think and provides more relevant and timely information) and thus improves decision making. There is no doubt that it will provide this opportunity, but it is an opportunity which must be grasped: it will not be inevitable. However, where it does occur in the Civil Service this will not, except in a few special cases, generate revenue to pay for the costly investment (in capital, in management and staff effort and organisational change). This is in contrast to the commercial world

where the investment in IT could pay for itself by increasing revenue in a variety of ways.

Of course, IT can, and does, generate real and realisable savings to cover some investments. But the history of the application of technology to administrative processes is that, overall, it has an enabling effect: enabling more and quite different things to happen, improving productivity and containing the rising costs of increased information activity. The better the information, and the more easily it is provided, the more likely it is that it will generate demands for decisions and action which were hitherto impracticable or not even imagined. The nature of corporate business today, including that of government, is markedly different from what it was at the beginning of the century because of the introduction of technology. If we used today the administrative methods of eighty years ago, it would have required a vast increase in manpower to deal with today's business. The productivity increase, even before the significant technology developments over the last ten years, has been enormous but so has administration and information activity. The extension of the information sector' will continue to interact with the drive for increased administrative productivity, and so keep up the need to use IT in its new forms thus extending the information sector further, and continuing the cycle.

Real information needs

Where the investment is justified on grounds of improved decision making, there is the problem of valuing the forecast improvement. This is a primitive art at present. It presupposes, for one thing, a clear perception of real information needs. Clear understanding of the objectives of the organisation is one part of the process of defining real information needs. But this itself is a difficult process particularly when it involves a large and complex organisation as most government departments are. The interaction between departmental strategies for FMI (Financial Management Initiative) and for IT is therefore of great importance. A sensible IT strategy cannot be developed in a vacuum. It must be designed to support corporate business objectives.

The parameters of information systems

When all computers were self-contained entities on special sites, surrounded by their high priests providing the bridge between the users and the computer systems, the parameters of a computer system were relatively definable and only a part of a greater information system. The introduction of communications brings interconnections between different computers, and it also brings terminals to the user community

as a whole. It makes definition of an information technology system a much more arbitrary affair, and potentially almost synonymous with the whole information system which it serves.

This adds to the problem of identifying the costs and benefits attributable to an IT system, and thus also to the problem of defining the value of the investment. (Ron Burton's article on investment appraisal in the August 1982 issue of *Management in Government* dealt with this point in some detail). Perhaps more significantly, the nature and business of the information handling process will change. Some manual information systems or IT systems, satisfactorily managed separately and discretely today, will change out of recognition in the future. This is already happening in the commercial world where the nature of some commercial businesses has changed because of IT.

But government has a special role in the economy as a whole. It is perhaps the largest information handling organisation; it processes vast quantities of information received from the rest of the economy and distributes information back. This means that the methods used for government information handling cannot be viewed and planned in isolation from those used in the rest of the economy. This will be much more evident as IT is applied widely in the commercial world and the domestic world. The recent report on 'Making a Business of Information' from the Information Technology Advisory Panel to the Prime Minister, which was published in the autumn of 1983, illustrates some of these cultural changes.

Exploring the frontiers

Much work remains to be done in the Civil Service, and elsewhere, on the whole question of information needs, on the use of IT to support them, on information handling methods, and on information systems. The signposts include 'knowledge', 'understanding', 'shared vision', 'value', 'better decision making', 'information needs', 'output', 'effectiveness', 'performance measures', and 'information services'. Technical constraints such as the need for reliable security and privacy methods, and the need for standards in machine-readable data, and in communications, are not yet solved. Seeking solutions to them, and to the cultural constraints will, I am sure, preoccupy those in IT, and in financial and organisational management, over the next few years.

Another quote from T S Eliott (a perceptive poet!), expresses the processes which technological change compels us to go through to see how IT can be used beneficially:

'We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.'

(Little Gidding)

This exploration process itself is continuous. It is a bit like starting at a frontier and conducting a survey of the unmapped terrain ahead to arrive back with the map; only to depart immediately for the new frontier to start all over again.

Four years ago the unmapped terrain was 'New Technology' and 'Office Automation'. We now have, at least, the main tracks identified here and indeed have developed a new subset of the language to describe it. And the infrastructure for IT in the Service is changing and developing. The implementation of the telecommuniations strategy, work on pay and grading problems, new approaches to procurement, the extensive IT awareness, education and training programme of the Civil Service College and in departments, new IT organisational structures in departments, and even CCTA's own reorganisation, are all some of the signs of the changing infrastructure. The cultural change is gathering pace. But it will, and probably always will, still be slower than the pace of invention. Meanwhile the scouts in CCTA and elsewhere have departed for the information frontier.

Telecommunications in Administrative Government: The Next Ten Years

P Aspden and C R D Tatham

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Introduction

Telecommunications is the communication of voice conversations, text, data and images by means of wires, radio waves and, increasingly these days, by fibre optic cables. Central government spends about £200 million each year on telecommunications goods and services, predominantly on telephone call charges and equipment rental from British Telecom (BT). Just under half of this is spent on operational telecommunications for defence, for the Home Office and other similar purposes. The remainder

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is spent by the administrative departments such as the Inland Revenue, the Department of Health and Social Security, Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the many small departments.

As some readers may be aware CCTA is responsible for general policy on the use of information technology (computers, telecommunications and advanced office systems) in central government departments. In addition, CCTA manages the Government Telecommunications Network (GTN) linking over 600 major offices out of the 2,500 or so government offices across Britain of a size to justify having a private telephone exchange (there are some 7,000 government buildings in all), and its hub, the Central Branch Exchange complex (CBX) serving Whitehall.

Significant changes are taking place in the telecommunications environment. It has been possible for some time to represent speech by a series of numbers. This is achieved by sampling speech waves 8,000 times a second, and by representing the wave form by its amplitude at each of these sample points. Reversing the process, the speech can be reconstructed and the quality is at least as good as the traditional (analogue) telephone speech. The advantage of this process is that 'speech' can be handled by computers. What is of recent significance is the falling real cost of electronic equipment, making it increasingly economic to transmit voice conversations and handle them in telephone exchanges using digital technology. Since computers also handle numbers and letters, the technologies of telecommunications and computing are converging. A second significant change is the relaxation of the British Telecom (BT) monopoly which is introducing more competition. These changes are bringing a much wider range of telecommunications goods and services, and providing valuable opportunities. At the same time they increase complexity and risk in the management of telecommunications.

CCTA therefore concluded that a new framework should be prepared for planning telecommunications in administrative government. Accordingly in the spring of 1982 a contract was awarded to Eosys in association with F International to recommend a telecommunications strategy for the period 1983/92. Eosys reported to CCTA in January 1983. During 1983 presentations to and consultations with departments took place.

The Treasury response* to the study recommendations was announced by the Ministry of State, Mr Barney Hayhoe, at a press briefing on 12 January 1984, and is summarised in the remainder of this article.

*The Treasury response was published in March 1984 by HMSO in the series 'Information Technology in the Civil Service'.

The Eosys Recommendations

The management of telecommunications

Of the £108 million spent on administrative telecommunications in 1981/82, well over 90 per cent was devoted to telephony charges, the remainder being spread between data and text communication. Following analysis of departmental plans throughout government, Eosys estimate that there will be a marked increase in demand for telecommunications from about 1985 onwards because of falling equipment costs and increasing departmental computerisation. They also estimate that the number of communicating computer terminals in administrative government will rise to about 100,000 by 1992.

Eosys argue that, by careful management, government administrative telecommunications expenditure over the next ten years should remain fairly constant in real terms, the necessary increased investment being counterbalanced by savings rising to £15 million per annum. This argument has been accepted.

The main contribution to these savings will be from:

(a) the replacement of obsolescent telephone exchanges, to take advantage of the facilities on modern exchanges for reducing call charges and other costs. Modern exchanges also provide improved accountability and cost control.

(b) the use of 'call logging' techniques, encouraging cost consciousness in the use of the telephone by periodically feeding back to the users and their local management summarises of the time of day, duration and destination of the calls made from their telephones.

(c) the modernisation and expansion of the GTN, and replacement of the obsolescent CBX complex with modern systems. Both will reduce overall costs, improve the ability of the network to remain operational when faults arise, and enable the network to support new generations of terminal equipment handling image, data and electronic mail in addition to voice communication.

Telecommunications standards

For many years the importance of telecommunications standards has been recognised. Users want to exchange information between terminating equipment (eg telephones, computer terminals, computer systems) regardless of manufacturer or geographical location. This cannot be achieved without internationally agreed and implemented standards. At the most basic level, for example, the implementation of agreed standards ensures that all makes of electric plug operate

satisfactorily in the same socket. At a more complex level, they ensure that business and residential users in this country can make international telephone calls. For the supplier, when international standards are implemented, there are larger and more competitive markets. Although standard writing is slow, much has already been achieved to accommodate the changing telecommunications environment.

Eosys recommend that government should place more emphasis on the use of standards in procurement to ensure compatibility of telecommunications and computer equipment. CCTA accepts this and believes greater emphasis should be given to induce suppliers to implement, and users to employ, emerging data communications standards from the International Standards Organisation (ISO). The Department of Trade and Industry is, under the aegis of the Focus Committee on Information Technology Standards, preparing a range of preliminary standards for UK implementation designed to anticipate or 'intercept' eventual international standards — this is known as the 'Focus Committee Intercept Strategy'. This strategy will enable UK suppliers to be well prepared to launch products conforming to the eventually ratified international standards. CCTA, being a party to the strategy, will take it into account in drawing up procurement standards.

Data communications

Data communications networks enable users at different geographical locations to transmit data between themselves using telecommunications links. In their analysis of departmental plans Eosys could find no reason to delay the introduction of currently proposed departmental data networks. At the moment there is no clear financial justification for sharing such networks between departments, although as tariffs and costs change the situation may alter. Eosys suggest that this position should be reviewed in 1985. In addition, Eosys recommend that existing and new plans for data communications networks should be directed wherever possible towards particular internationally agreed communications standards to permit integration if required at a later date. CCTA supports these recommendations and will be strongly encouraging departments to use, for their departmental data communications networks, standards compatible with those used nationally by British Telecom.

Inter-departmental Administrative Telecommunications Committee

Eosys recommended that an Inter-departmental Administrative Telecommunications Committee should be set up. This recommendation has been strongly supported by departments. CCTA agrees that such a

committee is valuable for considering general issues such as the future development of the GTN, common standards for networks, and for allowing departments to share their experiences in cost management in telephony and data communications.

Since CCTA's policy is to encourage departments to merge the management of computing and telecommunications, it is proposed that a new structure of committees working on this end will be set up. As recommended by Eosys, the new committee structure should have (*inter alia*) two working groups, one devoted to telephony cost management and the other to data communications.

Telecommunications and the role of the CCTA

The consultants' recommendations on the telecommunications policy and management role of CCTA are that CCTA should:

- continue to manage the inter-departmental telecommunications system;
- continue to have responsibility for procurement of telecommunications goods and services;
- continue to set technical and other standards for the development of telecommunications in government;
- promote more actively new telecommunications techniques within government;
- provide more support to departments on the costs and availability of telecommunications services.

CTTA accepts these recommendations and, given the extra resources on the scale recommended by Eosys, can seek to fulfill them.

Until very recently, British Telecom supplied most goods and services on a rental basis. As the liberalisation of the telecommunications market advances, more can be purchased from competing suppliers. There are advantages in centralised procurement because of the discounts and administrative savings of bulk purchasing. CCTA has already started to negotiate centrally such contracts with suppliers, with individual deliveries being administered locally by departments as far as possible.

Telecommunications pilot projects

Eosys recommended that an amount equivalent to about 2 per cent of annual expenditure on administrative telecommunications (that is, some £2 million) should be ploughed back annually into pilot studies and exploratory pilot projects. Such an investment in exploring the value of the new goods and services in the fast-developing field of telecommunications is comparable with those made by large private companies.

CCTA considers that, at least until telecommunications management resources have been built up to the recommended level, a more modest ploughback is appropriate, and accordingly £750,000 has been allocated in 1984/85 for this purpose. Similar expenditure in subsequent years will be considered in the light of this initial experience. These infrastructure pilot activities will complement an established programme of pilot project and exploratory trials in other aspects of information technology (IT).

A successful example of a pilot study already carried out by CCTA is that into telephone extension logging. This study showed that the technique was cost-effective for application in government. Departments have been encouraged to implement logging schemes, and many are now doing so. The report of that study, entitled 'Telephone Extension Logging', was published by HMSO as the first volume in the series *IT in the Civil Service:* (ISBN 0 11 630720 X).

Resources

CTTA accepts that the savings mentioned earlier are achievable, and that many of the changes recommended by Eosys should be carried out. But as the Eosys study observes, these require more staff and investment at an early date.

Telecommunications resources in CCTA

Eosys recommended that the effort devoted to telecommunications in CCTA should be doubled over the coming two years. There are at present about 30 staff, divided between telecommunications specialist services, liaison with departments, and procurement. Eosys derived this recommendation from analysis of the central corporate telecommunications staff of a number of major private companies.

Eosys argued that the Civil Service will not have enough of the required technical expertise in-house, and accordingly they recommend that some telecommunications activities will have to be contracted out. The Treasury has accepted these recommendations concerning extra telecommunications manpower in CCTA, and about 50 per cent of the requirement will be contracted out.

The Treasury has also accepted the arguments that the central London CBX complex should be modernised. This will entail a multi-million pound capital expenditure, spread over about five years. There will be considerable offsetting savings even without taking into account crucial but hard-to-quantify improvements in resilience, reliability and functionality. As with other items of expenditure on inter-departmental telecommunications, the cost will be recovered from the user departments, in this case over an amortisation period of several years.

All the spending referred to above, including the contracted-out

support, the pilot studies and the replacement of the CBX, will be accommodated within the Treasury's present spending plans.

Resources in departments

The Eosys report does not dwell on the subject of telecommunications resources within administrative departments, but notes that most of the latter manage their telecommunications by accommodation officers, who are seldom specialists in telecommunications. Those few departments already using significant on-line computer systems also possess some computer telecommunications expertise. But as a generalisation, the number of telecommunications experts outside the centre is very small.

Because of the liberalisation of the telecommunications market and the rapid development of telecommunications technology, departments are being faced with an increasing choice of goods and services. In addition, where once BT were exclusively responsible for supplying and maintaining a whole package of goods and services (eg telephone exchange, block wiring, handsets), departments will be faced increasingly with several suppliers (including BT), each providing only a part of the package. If departments are to take full advantage of these new goods and services and avail themselves of the opportunities for choice, they will have to build up their telecommunications resources in the longer term, particularly in the case of the larger departments. In the short term, CCTA will provide more support to them, and will probably always need to provide telecommunications expertise to the smaller departments, augmented as appropriate by consultancy effort brought in from industry.

Training

It is clear from the above that more civil servants need to be skilled in telecommunications. Indeed the extent to which the benefits described in the strategy study will be achieved depends significantly on the availability of manpower with the appropriate skills. Training is therefore of great importance. The CCTA and the Civil Service College have jointly set up a number of telecommunications training courses. More are under consideration, and the use of external basic training courses is also being considered.

Conclusion

Significant changes in he telecommunications environment are providing valuable opportunities and at the same time increasing complexity and risk in the management of telecommunications. This article summarises a robust strategy for planning an efficient and effective telecommunications infrastructure for central government for the next decade.

Training for the Management of Technological Change: A Case Study

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Introduction

Large scale technological change involves training: everybody involved needs to learn new skills and new ways of behaving. This is as true for the managers of the system as it is for the people who have to actually operate the machines. Managers will need to know how the new system works and how to manage it, but they may also benefit from training in the management of the change. This article is about a training course in the Management of Change which was developed for the middle management grades of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre (DVLC), Swansea, at DVLC's request. The course was to aid managing the implementation of a very substantial replacement computer system (possibly the largest ever tackled in central government). It is hoped that the approach developed for this course may be relevant in other contexts.

In what follows, the nature and scale of DVLC's activities and the nature of the replacement system project are first described and then the training programme itself.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

The DVLC was established to centralise the administration of driver and vehicle licensing. The foundation stone for the first building — appropriately enough the computer block — was laid in 1969 and the first driving licences were issued in 1973, with the registration and licensing of new vehicles being taken on in 1974. The main functions of DVLC are as follows:

- to maintain an up-to-date record of drivers and issue them with licences as appropriate: there are some 30 million individual records on the computer file and about 6 million licences are issued each year.
- to maintain an up-to-date record of vehicles and their 'registered keepers': this computer file has about 24 million records and about

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10 million new or amended registration documents are issued each year.

- to collect vehicle excise duty: DVLC's role here is to issue reminders (1.4 to 2.1 million per month). The licences themselves are obtained mainly from Post Offices or from the Department's Local Vehicle Licensing Office (LVLOs) in the case of heavy goods vehicles, with particulars being sent to DVLC, Swansea. The LVLOs, which also handle first registration and licensing of vehicles, and enforcement, are organisationally part of DVLC.

The figures given above will give an impression of the scale of the DVLC operation. As a further indication it may be noted that the *daily* intake of mail is about 250,000 pieces of post and that this represents half the postal business in Swansea and 20 per cent of that for the whole of Wales.

The considerable daily volume of work is processed on a flowline basis. This has already changed in anticipation of the replacement system, but it will first be described as it was in 1980 when the initial decisions about the replacement system were being taken.

The main work-flow for driving licence applications and vehicle registration documents is shown in a simplified form in Figure 1.

Post opening The mail arrives sorted by post code into different types, envelopes are opened, and applications date-stamped. Cash and cheque payments are checked and then sent to the Accounts Branch. Mail is then divided into different types of transaction.

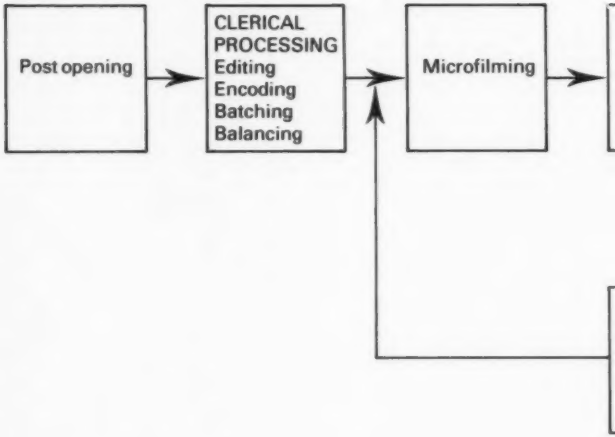
Clerical processing Applications are checked for obvious errors (and about 5 per cent returned to the applicant), much of the information given is assigned a code, and the applications are then made up into batches (usually one hundred transactions of the same type) for control purposes.

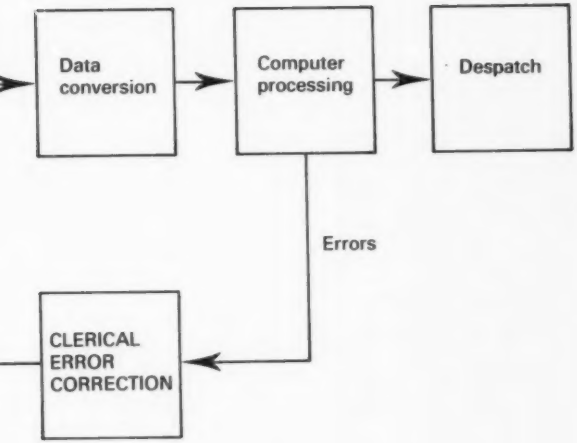
Microfilming This is a space-saving way of keeping a record of all documents received. Documents are numbered as they are microfilmed to permit subsequent retrieval from the microfilm library.

Data conversion The information contained on the application forms is converted into a form suitable for input to the computer by Data Processors using PCK (Processor Controlling Keying) equipment. This operation produces magnetic tapes of partly validated data for input to the computer.

Computer processing There are separate main files for vehicles and drivers on main frame computers. Magnetic tapes containing the information from application forms etc are created each day and run overnight. This produces a new updated master file and a print tape

Figure 1
DVLC Simplified Workflow




Data conversion
Computer processing
Despatch
Errors
CLERICAL ERROR CORRECTION

specifying the output required. The print tape is run through high speed printers to produce licences, reminders etc, using continuous stationery. Some input information is rejected by the computer, and reject reports are sent to clerical teams for checking and case work. Once corrected, these applications are returned via Data Conversion for fresh processing.

Despatch The continuous stationery is guillotined, folded and inserted into envelopes in three separate, mechanised operations.

This method of work was felt to be the only practicable way of getting the centralised system off the ground. However, the flowline system has a number of drawbacks:

- individual transactions take some time to get through the system because of queueing, handling in transit and control procedures, even though the total work on each transaction takes only a matter of minutes;
- bottlenecks can develop;
- discrepancies require double handling;
- DVLC has no record of individual transactions until late on (after computer processing) and even then it takes a day or two to get information because the computers are not online;
- many of the tasks are so routine and fragmented that they do not represent a proper use of an able workforce.

The replacement system

The mainframe computers and associated equipment are due for replacement by 1985 and this provided an opportunity to re-examine the organisation of the work. It was proposed that the flowline concept for pre-computer work should be abandoned and replaced by team working with about 100 teams carrying out the whole task from opening the post to inputting the data onto the computer. It was envisaged that each team might consist of 20 or so people led by an EO. Sixteen staff would open post, examine applications and key-in data at a visual display unit (VDU), and a further four would carry out accounting and checking procedures, supervision and correct more complex errors. These 'integrated input' (IIP) teams would be formed by combining staff from the existing clerical and data conversion areas. Data entry and error correction would be done on-line to the computer, although the actual processing and updating of the main file would continue to be done as an overnight batch processing operation. Errors revealed on updating would be returned to the originating team for correction, thus providing feedback on action which is lacking in the present mode of working.

Microfilming, it was envisaged, could be handled by locating a pool of microfilmers on each floor of the building to serve a number of IIP teams. They could be staffed by teams which could include staff from existing microfilm areas.

The new mainframe computers would store data on disc rather than tape, and this would permit staff dealing with enquiries from the public and with applications to check the main file record more rapidly, directly from their VDUs.

Other changes were also planned: the introduction of laser printers to produce the output, more automation of the despatch operation, and the introduction of an Optical Character Reader to input data on vehicle licensing received from the Post Office.

The new system was expected to offer a number of major advantages:

- speedier access to records, permitting an easier and quicker response to enquiries and easier error correction;
- better jobs — members of the IIP teams would be dealing with the whole job rather than a small part of it;
- improved management information;
- a reduction in the complement of staff required to do the job.

It will be apparent that the new system entails major changes in working methods, staffing and organisation. A gradual move towards job enlargment and integration which had been taking place in the clerical areas has been given added impetus by the IIP plans. So much so, that by the time the new system is ready to be implemented, all the clerical work — post opening, editing etc and error correction will be done within teams. This means that the major changes brought about by the new system will be the introduction of terminals and the integration of clerical and data processing staff.

It was in this context that the College was asked to provvide a short training course to help the line management of DVLC manage the changeover to the new system with the minimum of disruption and difficulty.

The design of the course

The course was designed in conjunction with DVLC's Training Branch and the project team on the basis of three sets of information: firstly, an assessment of the needs of managers in the particular situation they were facing; secondly, an understanding of organisational and technological changes in general; and thirdly, some assumptions about how this sort of training ought to be done. This section will indicate how these elements influenced the design of the course.

There were three main factors to consider regarding the needs of DVLC managers:

(1) They already had a considerable experience of managing change as there had been continued change in the systems, procedures and organisation since DVLC was opened. DVLC was not therefore suddenly moving from a static to a dynamic state. On the other hand there seemed some danger of complacency. The lessons learned from the massive change when DVLC was set up were an important starting point in planning the replacement system.

(2) Implementation, even of pilot running, was some way away. The design of the course was being developed during 1982, at which point it was expected that tenders would be issued during 1983 and pilot running would commence early in 1984. However, design work had started in earnest and staff were already well aware that major changes were in the offing. So although the change itself seemed some way away, its effects were already starting to be felt.

(3) The proposals already drawn up had been based on a thorough consultation with people in the operational areas likely to be most affected. It was important that the approach taken by the course should cut across this.

The course reflected these aspects of the situation; it also necessarily embodied a concept of organisational change. There are two basic views of change, which can be labelled 'gap' and 'incremental' models. The gap view sees change as essentially about getting from A to B, about bridging a gap. Such a view not only describes the process of change but also implies how it should be managed. The problems of changing are seen as stemming from ways in which state B (the 'desired future state') *differs* from state A (the 'present state') and this argues for plans and strategies to overcome the problems and successfully effect the change. A particularly helpful aspect of the gap model is the concept of a 'transitional period' which is seen as starting when a change is known to be in the offing and only to end when the new system is fully operational. It is argued that such a transitional period is different from both a pre- and a post-change state and requires a different management style and perhaps new organisational structures. The differences stem from two causes: the uncertainty and anxiety felt by people (staff *and* managers) about the eventual outcome of the change and the need to keep the old system operational, usually with depleted resources since effort is going into preparing for the new one.

By contrast, the incremental view is more concerned with situations

in which it is not clear where the organisation should be changing to. There is no clearly defined desired future state — either because of uncertainty about what is appropriate or because unresolved conflict in the organisation makes it impossible to decide. In these circumstances changes take place by small tentative steps which are then evaluated before leading to further steps which may or may not be in the same direction, depending on the results of the evaluation and on external changes which have taken place meanwhile.

It seemed clear that although DVLC's proposals had some incremental aspects — there was to be a pilot scheme, implementation would be phased, on-line access would only come along later — a gap model nonetheless fitted quite well, in that the major features of a desired future state had been defined and were being used as a firm basis for planning and design. Some of the basic concepts of a gap view of change were therefore embodied in the course design.

Finally, my own view of this sort of training course is that it should be firmly related to the problems and issues that course members are currently facing in their work. I wanted therefore to design a course which was closely geared to current concerns and which dealt with real rather than hypothetical issues. Further, I hoped that the course could be made to be part of the process of managing change in DVLC in an immediate and practical way.

The course

I will now outline the course design which resulted from the elements considered above. It was decided that initially the course should be designed for all managers in the grades HEO to Principal from three groups of branches: the operational branches most directly affected (clerical processing, microfilming, data conversion etc), service branches (Personnel Management, Office Services), and specialist branches who would be indirectly affected. In effect this was all non-ADP staff in the relevant grades. This was because the changes would affect the whole organisation, managers were seen as inter-changeable generalists and it was undesirable to appear to discriminate. Most ADP staff were excluded on the basis that although having to cope with change, they were doing so as individuals rather than managers. Also their large numbers might have unbalanced the course. More ADP staff attended the later courses, however, producing what was generally felt to be a very valuable dialogue between ADP staff and users which enabled each to better understand the other's point of view.

It was decided that the College would initially mount five courses for about 20 people each time and subsequently agreed that the College should run a further three courses. For these (pilot running was by this

time getting nearer) the selection criteria were changed and only executive grades in the 'front line' branches — those which would be reorganised to produce the IIP teams — and those involved on the ADP side attended. In practice, the majority of course members for these courses were EOs.

The detailed programme of the course is included as an appendix; the main elements are outlined below. (These remained unchanged during the first set of courses, although the sequence and timing were improved after the first course. The appended programme shows the second and subsequent courses).

1. A small amount of 'theory': the 'gap' model of change; an exploration of the sources of resistance to change and the way in which a change produces reactions in the various 'sub-systems' of the organisation; an exploration of the distinctive features of a traditional period, as defined above.

2. Syndicate discussions of:

- what members had learned from their experience of managing change so far;
- what were the main implications of the replacement system, the main problems which could be foreseen;
- developing a strategy for dealing with specified problems (these were defined afresh for each course on the basis of the problems identified and showed an interesting gradual development of subtlety as time passed). Some examples of the kind of questions considered: How should the first IIP teams be selected and how should the remaining staff be integrated into IIP teams; How should job satisfaction and career development be managed under IIP.

The syndicate discussions were regarded by most participants as very valuable. They provided an opportunity to share information, problems and perceptions with people from other parts of the organisation and led to increased awareness of the issues the new system would raise, how widespread and general the effects were and also how the new system would affect different parts of the organisation.

3. Talks by DVLC staff:

- an outline of the main features and latest developments in the IIP systems by the head of the section specifying the clerical aspects of the replacement system. This talk invited course members to participate in the analysis of how the problems could be overcome.
- a review of the overall strategy being adopted to manage the change and the present position by the Assistant Secretary Project

Manager. This talk outlined the overall project management structure, discussed relations with key groups such as possible suppliers, the PSA (who had a major programme of preparatory work to carry out) and the Trade Union Side. The talk also told middle managers what their own senior management expected of them by way of managing change. This had of course a powerful impact — but it was a message which could only be delivered by a member of DVLC's own management. As the Project Manager said, the course was intended to bring up the curtain on the management of change.

- a Trade Union view by CPSA and SCPS representatives who appeared on a 'without prejudice' basis to outline the Trade Union Side's views and concerns.

4. A role-played announcement-of-change exercise intended to complement the analysis and discussion of change with some, albeit simulated, experiences of how it felt to put a plan into action and to be on the receiving end. This exercise was one of the more controversial parts of the course: some people loved it and felt that they gained important insights into their own behaviour or the feelings of staff, others felt it was unrealistic and of little value.

5. Two mechanisms to link the course to the actual management of the change:

- after the discussion of the transitional period, course members individually answered three questions: 'What can I and should I be getting on with right now?', 'What information do I still need?', 'What concerns do I still have?'. Their answers were aggregated and circulated as a reminder of their own action plans but the aggregated list was also sent to the Project Manager as a form of feedback. Some typical examples of answers to the first of these questions were: 'I will be obtaining as much information as possible and passing it on to my staff';, 'I will feed back to higher management the problems anticipated in maintaining the present system'.
- at the end of the course, members divided into trios to answer the question 'What should somebody else be doing?' (a not very elegant way of getting at actions which were now perceived as necessary but which individuals could not do themselves). These proposals were similarly aggregated and sent to the Project Manager after each course. Examples: 'The "sameness" of middle management jobs means that they need to be enriched', 'Staff are very curious about the future layout and working conditions of an

IIP floor. Could guided tours of the 4th (pilot) floor be arranged for operational staff now and during the pilot?'.

The idea was to open up a channel of communication between the course and those responsible for the overall management of the change. To complete this process, each course received a response from the Project Manager replying to the concerns and proposals which had been raised.

This dialogue seems to have worked well. The 'outputs' were transcribed, typed and distributed soon after the end of each course. A response was received before the next course in the series and the outputs and replies from each previous course were fed forward to the next one to try and make the process a cumulative one, rather than a continual reinvention of the wheel. This was starting to become cumbersome by the end of the series but certainly helped to maintain a development in the proposals put forward. One useful piece of learning out of this process was that course members' ideas were initially quite numerous but were expressed rather cryptically in shorthand. From the third course onwards two ground rules were laid down: that suggestions should be for *new* actions and that they should be written out in full to ensure comprehensibility. As a consequence, fewer but better formulated proposals came forward.

Of course, to be meaningful such a dialogue has to have real consequences. The feedback was extremely useful to those managing the project in providing a measure of the effects of how they were managing it. At a more specific level two early concerns were uncertainty among the ADP staff about staffing allocations in the run up to the new system and a feeling among line managers that the communication of project information to staff in the operational areas could be improved. It was not very long before a staffing plan for reorganising ADP areas was announced (of course it had already been under development) and a project working group was set up to look at the issue of communications.

The first series of five courses was succeeded by a further series of three aimed as noted above at a more specific population. The opportunity was taken at this point of compressing the course into two full working days by deleting the role play exercise and the first syndicate discussion. Further courses are now being run by DVLC's own Training Branch whose aims is to involve EOs from the operational areas who will be involved in the early stages of the new system.

Conclusion

Although not formally evaluated, the course seems to have been successful in meeting its three main aims of increasing awareness of

the implications of the new system, helping managers think about how best to manage them and energising them to start managing change now. This judgement is based on end-of-course assessment sheets completed by the course members and on the judgement of project and training staff at DVLC.

Appendix: The course timetable

DAY ONE	
1030-1045	Introduction
1045-1145	Syndicate discussion and report back: Lessons so far
1145-1215	An overall view of the change process
1215-1330	Lunch
1130-1430	The IIP system
1430-1500	The Trade Union view
1500-1515	Tea
1515-1545	Reactions to change
1545-1700	Syndicate discussion and report back: Implications and problems
DAY TWO	
0845-1000	The overall strategy and present position
1000-1015	Coffee
1045-1245	Syndicate discussion and report back: Planning a strategy
1245-1400	Lunch
1400-1430	Managing in the transitional period
1430-1545	Syndicate work: Managing in the transitional period
1545-1645	Briefing and preparation for management of change exercise
DAY THREE	
0845-1115	Management of change exercise
1115-1200	Action planning
1200-1215	Review and closure

Bridging the Communications Gap

D P Laughrin

David Laughrin is head of a Personnel Management policy division in the Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office). He has spent most of his career in the Civil Service Department, where he was Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Secretary and later to Head of the Home Civil Service. He also served as Secretary to the Megaw Inquiry on Civil Service Pay, and worked briefly as Manager of local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security in Uxbridge and Hounslow.

'You do a lot of writing at your work, Daddy!' said my young son recently as part of the Rayner-like review of my activity to which he regularly subjects me. 'But what happens?' This was clearly a crucial phase in the scrutiny. 'I suppose that depends on who reads it' I said cautiously. 'Why?' he said, as he often does nowadays. 'Doesn't it matter what it is and how you do it?'

A variety of contacts in departments and a few management consultants have been posing the same questions to me in the course of work on management communications needs in government which I and a number of colleagues in various departments have been pursuing in recent months. This article summarises some personal thoughts prompted by that work. It looks at the background to recent interest in communications as an issue in its own right and goes on to reflect on practice outside and inside the Civil Service.

Current interest

The suggestion that effective management should promote good communications is hardly novel, dating back, some would say, to the ten commandments. But interest in the subject has increased, particularly

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in the past few years, when a number of initiatives have been taken.

The Employment Act 1982 contained a clause[1], *inter alia,* requiring companies to contain a statement in their annual reports describing the action taken to introduce, maintain, or develop arrangements for providing employees systematically with information on matters of concern to them as employees. Companies have to show how they consult their employees on a regular basis, and achieve a common awareness on the part of all employees of the financial and economic factors affecting the performance of the company.

In another part of the wood, the European Community has before it draft directives, the Vredeling and Fifth Directives[2], which would impose specific obligations on companies for consultation and communication. Influenced by this, the Institute of Personnel Management and the Industrial Participation Association have produced jointly a set of principles and standards of practice for employee involvement and participation[3], which include heavy emphasis on communication. Various conferences, promoted by the Confederation of British Industry, the Industrial Society, the British Institute of Management and others, have shown evidence of the contribution that many industrial managers believe improved communications can make to more effective performance. Finally, that increasingly discussed survey of practice in some of the most successful business corporations in the United States, Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence*[4], is dotted with references to communication.

In the public sector here, the Government, in its observations on the Third Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee[5], committed itself to the importance of maintaining good communications with its staff. Various job satisfaction exercises in the Civil Service, reported in this journal's predecessor, have shown the value of greater understanding and dialogue between manager and staff[6]. All this amounts to a significant case for the subject to be taken seriously by Civil Service managers.

[1]*Employment Act 1982,* Clause 1.

[2]*Draft European Communities Directive on Procedures for Informing and Consulting Employees. Draft European Communities Fifth Directive on the Harmonisation of Company Law.* (Available in a Consultation Document from Department of Employment and Department of Trade and Industry. November 1983.)

[3]*Employee Involvement and Participation: Principles and Standards of Practice,* and *Action Guide.* Industrial Participation Association, 85 Tooley Street, LONDON SE1 2Q2 and Institute of Personnel Management, IPM House, Camp Road, Wimbledon, LONDON SW19 4UW.

[4]*In Search of Excellence.* By Thomas J Peters and Robert H Waterman Jr. Harper and Row, 1982.

[5]*The Government's Observations on the Third Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee* (Cmnd 8616) paragraphs 10 and 11.

[6]See, for example, 'Job Satisfaction: A Review of Progress and Management Viewpoint. Marie Shroff. *Management Services in Government.* August 1981.

The nature of communication

There should be no surprise about this. Management has been broadly described as achieving results through people. Communication is an essential element in the process. But the danger of the platitude being understood in many different ways by different audiences, itself a common communication problem, indicates the need to define what it is that people are setting out to improve.

Such an attempt can be jargon-packed, and to avoid this it is safer to begin by looking at some common demands faced by most managers. For example:

- First, there is the need to give staff clear *information and instructions* about what they are meant to do and how they are supposed to carry out the main parts of their work, and about the conditions under which the work is done, including their personal rewards.
- Secondly, there is a need to provide *explanation* of how the work of a particular unit fits in with other work in an organisation, and contributes to a common goal.
- Thirdly, there is a need to provide *inspiration* by showing how work and its results can meet the needs of others and the aspirations of the staff.
- Fourthly, there can be a need for *persuasion* to encourage staff to co-operate with changes in procedures or technology which are necessary to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation
- Fifthly, there can be a need for *education* either of the staff by the manager, or possibly more commonly and constructively, of the manager by the staff, about the existence of a problem and the identification of ways to solve it.

In any organisation, such needs will not be met effectively unless there is a free and regular face-to-face exchange of views, both formally and informally, between the staff and their immediate manager. The good managers get out of their offices and talk to their staff where they are working every day. In organisations of any size there will also need to be effective arrangements for contact with the union or other representatives of staff. But if such arrangements are a necessary pre-requisite of effective communications, they are unlikely to be sufficient to ensure it in a larger organisation. Where there are several tiers of management and a complex business to perform, additional systems and techniques will almost certainly be required to support and supplement the efforts of the individual manager.

The view outside

Looking around outside the Civil Service, there is plenty of evidence of the commitment and resources that many successful organisations put into their communications effort. IBM, inspired by the business creed inherited from its founder, sees the maintenance of good communications as a constant objective. Its techniques include the systematic cascading of information and decisions from meetings at the top level in the company down through meetings of successive tiers of management, and regular staff opinion surveys carried out with computer-assisted analysis of information provided anonymously by staff. The surveys show what staff think they are not hearing enough about, as well as their opinions about other aspects of the Company's performance.

IBM also actively promote open-door and speak-up systems. Individuals have the right to appeal to senior management right up to the top of the Company on an issue that is troubling them. They can also question anonymously any facet of Company activity, and be guaranteed a full and prompt reply. Over 1,000 speak-up questions are received by the British subsidiary each year and a variety of speak-up exchanges of general interest are published in the Company's house journal. IBM are non-unionised, but other companies with union membership still see the need for such efforts.

Like IBM, an increasing number of companies are also using video cassettes as an additional means to provide information and inspiration. Ford stops its production lines to allow its staff to see presentations of the Company's annual results and plans. Many other organisations — like Barclays and the National Westminster Banks, Esso, BICC, British Gas, and Granada TV Rental — provide regular video programmes on company performance and changes in working practice or technology.

In a TV age, such programmes can have a powerful effect, allowing very senior managers in the organisation to get across in a clear way a uniform message to a large number of staff. But, of course, they cannot ensure that questions are answered, or the issues of most relevance to individual viewers are covered. Experience indeed suggests that video showings can have potential hazards as well as benefits. Senior managers unused or unsuited to the medium, without a clear purpose, or trying to cover up an unpalatable situation, can be cruelly exposed. The growing number of consultants in the field also suggests that those who believe in a ringing declaration, rather than a dialogue with those who are meant to take action, are doomed to expensive disappointment. Many organisations therefore find it necessary to supplement these video showings with question and answer sessions with suitably briefed line managers. Many also hold periodic meetings where the most senior

directors talk face-to-face to groups of more junior managers.

A number of companies also have clearly defined statements of their communications policy and objectives. One of the best of these, produced by Standard Telephones and Cables, is even published in an impressive booklet on the Company's business philosophy, where communications features high on its list of priorities.* Overall, my reading of consultant's work in organisations such as these indicates that there are a number of common features which make for effective communications practice:

- clear thinking about the needs and objectives of the organisation;
- a commitment from the top to a free flow of information;
- a planned strategy for dealing with foreseeable communications needs, for example a change of technology or the launch of an annual plan;
- a variety of different systems and media, designed to suit the culture and circumstances of the organisation;
- a senior manager with specific responsibility for communications;
- training and briefing for line managers on whom the main burden will fall;
- audit of the effectiveness of existing and new systems;
- encouragement of response to information from above, so that there is a genuine exchange of information;
- control of the flow of information so that important messages are not swamped in a mass of trivia.

The view inside

Government departments have also traditionally devoted considerable efforts to communications, mainly through formal contact with union representatives in the Whitley system, where exchanges on a wide variety of subjects to do with the work itself as well as conditions of service have been the norm. W[illegible]ten instructions and circulars in a highly formalised manner have been common, and house journals, though not universal, are found in most departments, though their content can sometimes be more social than work-related.

In recent years, however, considerable re-appraisal of what is required has been going on in a number of departments, where the effectiveness of existing methods has been reviewed and new approaches tried. Handbooks of instructions have proved a fruitful field for change. One departmental study found that its instructions for its junior clerical staff required a higher reading age than those for its

*See *The Best Company Book* (November 1983). Standard Telephones and Cables PLC; STC House, 190 Strand, LONDON WC1R 1DU.

graduate entrants. It is now engaged in an extensive revision of the style and form of its manuals, with the help of design consultants. Departments have also found that staff in local offices have either been using pamphlets designed for the public rather than their formal instructions, or have been devising their own algorithms to take them through common procedures more easily than the official manuals do. Revisions are now paying as much attention to the needs of the user as to the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the instructions.

Several departments, particularly those with a trading activity like the Property Services Agency, Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Civil Service Catering Organisation have found it impossible to provide regular information to their staff about the performance of the organisation as a whole. Specially designed statements of progress, and versions of annual reports where they exist, have been widely circulated to show how the work of each unit supports the general aims and results of the organisation as a whole. They have generally been well received.

New systems are also being tried to spread information rapidly about new developments. Departments like Health and Social Security have introduced systematic briefing of their operational managers. A few departments, such as the Royal Mint and part of the Treasury, have found the Industrial Society's team briefing approach of value. This is a form of highly structured 'cascade' briefing. Successive levels of management brief the staff who report to them on the basis of a standard agreed set of messages approved by top management. The meetings are set up at regular intervals, at least monthly, on a basis which allows the message to be passed quickly down the management chain. As a reminder of the key subjects in which the staff have an interest, messages are prepared under four headings: progress (how the organisation and the unit are doing); policy (changes required by management); people (news about personnel changes) and points of action (what the group is expected to do over the next period). Each level has discretion to add to the agreed message points of particular relevance to their group. Departments have found, however, that the system does stress downward communication, and attention needs to be paid to make sure that procedures for upward communication are effective as well.

Video cassettes have been little in evidence so far outside a training role, but a few departments have been experimenting with their potential. Much greater emphasis is also being placed by many departments on the need to explain aspects of Government policy to all the staff affected by them, and to present fully and in advance plans for major organisational or operational change. This is not always easy.

Parliamentary conventions and the great media interest in important policy developments sometimes mean staff cannot be told in advance about ministers' intentions. But it is now widely recognised that staff at least have the right to be told as much as is made available to the media and public as soon as is realistically possible. There is no excuse for a department's information effort to be directed solely outside its boundaries.

This experience and the outside evidence suggest that future improvements in the effectiveness of communications in the Civil Service will depend on:

- greater recognition by managers at all levels that they have a communications role to play and this is expected of them by their top management;
- greater attention to identifying communication needs and planning a strategy to meet them;
- more provision of briefing material to make it easier for managers to carry out their face-to-face briefing role;
- greater attention to the needs of the ultimate recipient of the information, together with a willingness to assess the effectiveness of existing systems;
- more experiments with new media;
- more direct and timely responses to suggestions or requests for more information, so that frank exchanges are encouraged;
- less reliance on dull, complex, badly presented written material.

Last word

The last word on the latter point comes in one of the scripts for the successful television programme "Yes, Minister', where the Minister is anxious to lose a piece of embarrassing information for ever. 'Get rid of it, Bernard' he says. 'I'll file it' sighs Bernard. 'But I want nobody ever to see it again,' says the Minister. 'Exactly, I'll file it' says Bernard. This is quite unfair to our clerical staff. But it does memorably remind us, as my son implied, that it would be wrong to assume that writing is the same as communication.

The Financial Management Unit of the Cabinet Office (MPO) and the Treasury

A W Russell

'Sandy' Russell is an Under Secretary in the Cabinet Office (MPO). Since 1982 he has been in charge of the joint Cabinet Office (MPO)/Treasury Financial Management Unit.

A small but unusual animal has been roaming the government park for the past two years. This is a central financial management unit consisting of civil servants and outside consultants. It was set up jointly by the Cabinet Office (MPO) and Treasury in the summer of 1982 for a year to help departments prepare their plans in response to the Government's Financial Management Initiative (FMI). Its life has subsequently been extended to the end of 1984 to help implement these plans.

Composition of the Unit

Since it was set up six civil servants and eight outside consultants have worked in the Unit, some of them for short periods on particular projects and some on a part-time basis. At any one time roughly the equivalent of six or seven people have been engaged full time on the Unit's activities. Those working in the Unit have brought to bear a wide range of qualifications and experience in financial management — not only in accountancy (the majority of the Unit's members have had accountancy

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qualifications) but in management and organisation, economics and operational research. The civil servants have come from the Treasury and MPO, MOD and DHSS. The consultants have been drawn from four well-known firms — Arthur Andersen, Coopers and Lybrand, Peat Marwick Mitchell and Hay-MSL. All have come with considerable experience of assignments in the private sector. Most too have previously undertaken projects in government departments, a point to which I return later.

Work of the Unit

In the first period of its life, the Unit worked with a large number of departments in preparing their plans for improving financial management. Naturally we operated selectively. We concentrated particularly on helping departments to develop their arrangements for managing their FMI programme, for example, in assessing the nature and scale of resources needed for introducing new information systems. The Unit distilled this experience in a report which set out its observations on common themes emerging in the plans and suggested likely lines of future development.[1] This was made available publicly as a background document to the White Paper on Financial Management in September 1983.[2]

In the second phase of its existence, the Unit became directly involved in helping departments implement their plans. This took two main forms.

First, members of the Unit contributed to specific projects in departments — for example, projects to evaluate and develop management information provided by Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries to top management; the setting up and operation of pilot schemes of budgetary control of manpower and other administrative costs by local managers; studies of the financial management of non-departmental public bodies and of the relationships between the department and the bodies in the light of the FMI. Sometimes the Unit member would be a part of a departmental project team; sometimes he would undertake a discrete element of work on behalf of the department; and at other times he would offer advice and guidance as a member of a steering group or some such other device.

Secondly, drawing on its involvement in specific projects of that kind, the Unit has sponsored exchanges of experience and views amongst a number of departments on issues and problems of common concern to them. We have concentrated on three key ares of the Initiative — the development of top management systems (on the lines of MINIS), the introduction, often on an experimental or pilot basis, of budgetary

[1] *Report by the MPO / Treasury Financial Management Unit*, MPO, 1983.
[2] *Financial Management Initiative in Government Departments*, Cmnd 9058, HMSO, 1983.

control systems and the handling of programmes of expenditure disbursed through non-departmental public bodies (quangos). This involved the discussion of working papers on particular issues and presentations of information about progress in departments from Unit members and departments in a series of informal seminars. And as in the first period of its existence the Unit is again disseminating the knowledge gained through these processes in a series of reports.

The Unit intends to operate in much the same way for the rest of this year. We plan, for example, to follow-up the look at programmes involving grants to non-departmental public bodies by helping departments look at other types of programmes of expenditure going outside the department in the form of grants, loans etc. Clarifying the responsibilities of policy and finance divisions in relation to such programmes is an important element of the FMI plans in a number of departments and discussion and dissemination of experience of progress should be helpful. The work on top management systems will also continue. In many departments the reviews which took place in 1983 have largely been experimental and a good deal of development and change is envisaged in 1984.

I mention two other aspects of the Unit's work so far. First, it has contributed to the development of the Initiative by the Treasury and Cabinet Office (MPO). It has helped those in the Treasury, MPO and Prime Minister's Efficiency Unit concerned with relevant policy developments to shape these in ways which reinforce the FMI — for example to ensure that the moves to delegate more authority to managers in personnel matters link directly with the strengthening under the FMI of the authority and accountability of these managers for the management of resources.

Secondly, members of the Unit have been heavily engaged in courses, seminars, discussions at the Civil Service College, in departments and outside the Service explaining and discussing the implications of the FMI. We have given this work a high priority because we have recognised from the outset that new systems will not be effective if there is not a widespread understanding of why the changes are being introduced and what is expected of managers at every level in departments.

I turn now from fact to personal opinion. I would like to pick out one or two characteristics of the Unit which strike me as particularly interesting or unusual and which might offer some more general lessons.

Status of Unit

First, there is its rather unusual status. On the one hand it was set up

by the MPO and Treasury and it reports to them. It is therefore very much an instrument of those departments to help them promote the FMI and is very concrete evidence of their joint commitment to secure and maintain a good momentum for the Initiative. On the other hand it was made absolutely clear from the outset that the Unit could and would not impose itself on departments. It would work in departments only where requested and under the direction of the top management of the department. It has also been made clear that the Unit's role is quite separate from that of the Treasury's Expenditure Division and in particular from the function of negotiating and controlling the resources allocated to departments.

On the whole I think this unusual status of the Unit has worked well. The willingness of departments to involve members of the Unit in sensitive work on their internal arrangements and at very formative stages when they are still clearing their own minds has been rather remarkable — all the more so as we have not been entirely reactive, waiting for invitations from departments, but have often taken the initiative to suggest areas of work where we believed that we could be especially helpful. I do not wish to paint too rosy a picture: like the Greeks, we have I think occasionally been suspected (if not feared) even when bearing gifts! But generally we have been able to build a fair measure of trust with departments; and as a result we have felt able at times to exert some influence on departments where we felt that we were justified in doing so. Equally, where we felt this was right, we have supported a department in discussion with Treasury on the assessment of the rate of progress which the department could reasonably be expected to make.

In short, the Unit is not pure consultancy but neither does it exercise a prescriptive role. Its influence derives mainly from its privileged position which enables it to operate across a range of departments and from the experience and qualities of its members. I turn to each of these points in turn.

Method of operation

We were clear from the outset that if the Unit simply assisted departments in an *ad hoc* and haphazard way, its impact would necessarily be very small. The equivalent to six or seven full-time people, whatever their quality and experience, could not hope to cover more than a tiny amount of ground across the span of government departments. Yet we also recognised that the Unit were not involved in depth in at least some projects in departments it would have no basis of direct knowledge and experience on which to operate. It was evident that the launching document for the FMI had sufficiently set out the

general principles and that further elaboration of these would not be particularly helpful. What was required was examples of their practical application in different situations.

The Unit attempted to reconcile these considerations by carefully selecting areas in which it would work in such a way that would throw as much light as possible on problems and issues faced by a number of departments. This would then help the Unit to foster an exchange of information and views amongst a group of departments with relevant experience to bring to bear on these issues. What we have sought to do is to exploit work in particular departments to the full to get the widest possible understanding of the practical application of the FMI principles in different types of circumstances.

I suppose that the Whitehall cliché for an approach of this kind is avoiding the re-invention of the wheel. The problem is that each department considers that its circumstances are sufficiently different to require wheels of a quite special design: indeed I sometimes think it is hard to get agreement that they should be round! But even if there can be an exaggerated view of the differences between departments, there is no doubt that great care has to be taken in read-across from one department to another. I am sure that the Unit has been least successful when it has failed to be sensitive to these differences. But I am also clear from our experience so far that we have provided practical benefits by focussing the attention of different departments on specific examples of how problems which are similar in nature for each of them are being tackled. Our most important contribution may well have been in helping to create an awareness of the value of disseminating information and experience of this kind and of providing a structure and focus for it rather than in any bright new ideas or solutions suggested by the Unit itself. Virtually every example drawn on has resulted from an initiative taken by one department or another and not by the Unit. What we have done is to help show the relevance of the practice in one department to others and to chip away at the 'not invented here, so therefore no good' approach which afflicts us all.

People

The third and final characteristic to which I draw attention is the nature of the people in the Unit and their experience.

The first and most obvious point here is the combination of civil servants and outside consultants. Joint working in departments occurs fairly often, but I think that the bringing together of consultants from a number of firms with civil servants in a Unit working in and advising a wide range of departments is more unusual. I had anticipated some difficulties in joint working of people using different techniques and

methods but in the event this proved more helpful than not. The fact that members of the Unit have viewed issues from different perspectives has generally contributed to a better understanding on our part on how best to assist departments. Certainly it has helped to ensure that the Unit has not been monolithic in its approach.

I have no doubt that an important factor in the successful contribution of the consultant members of the Unit is the recent experience of work in departments enjoyed by the four most senior consultants brought in at the outset. There was no time for an extended learning curve, and a knowledge of existing management systems in departments has therefore been crucial. As important has been their sensitivity to the political and parliamentary environment of so much of the work of the departments. There are valuable lessons to be learned from developments in financial management in the best organisations in the private sector but any attempt to propose straight transplants to government departments would have been impracticable and undesirable.

I note one particularly valuable lesson which the consultant members of the Unit brought from their experience outside government departments — the importance of not underestimating the effort and time needed to effect the major changes envisaged in departments' FMI programmes of work; and recognition that as much if not more effort must go into the explanation of the changes and the training of managers and staff as on the setting-up of the systems themselves. It has been helpful to have consultants point out that private sector organisations would regard the changes planned by departments as a very large-scale project indeed which would need to be planned and resourced accordingly.

There is another point worth noting. As a result of their experience and perhaps also because they are looking into a department from outside, Unit members have sometimes tended to see inter-connections between various aspects of the changes implied by the FMI programmes more readily than those working in the department. For example, on projects setting up pilot budget centres for local managers, the Unit member has often been able to help his departmental colleagues to relate work on improving the production and use of information about operations (for example, numbers of cases dealt with etc) to the improved production and use of financial information (for example, costs of management units and activities) and to changes in the arrangements for setting manpower complements and grades. Very often these have been the concern of separate people in the department. Unit members who have ranged over all of these aspects and seen the changes in the context of management as a whole have

therefore assisted the development of a more integrated approach. I do not want however to exaggerate their influence: there is no doubt that implementation of FMI plans has in any case been focussing the attention of people in departments on these interactions.

Supportive role

Introduction of major changes in systems and approach to management is not easy in any large organisation. The development of new systems inevitably involves teasing out a succession of problems — not least how to effect a smooth transition from existing arrangements to new without loss of control or disruption. I believe that fostering exchanges of ideas, experience and information — in a sense building up a community of interest — has helped those engaged in implementation in different departments. Unit members have also acted usefully as a sounding board for those engaged on FMI work to try out proposals and to consider arguments. This supportive role has I believe, been an important one for the Unit.

Conclusion

I draw one general lesson from all of this. I believe that where a programme of substantial management change is being undertaken across all Government departments, there is a valuable role for a small central capacity dedicated to the promotion of these changes and free from day-to-day policy and management tasks. The extent to which a positive impact is made depends crucially on establishing credibility with departments. That in turn depends first on the quality and experience of the people concerned, secondly on their ability to translate general lessons to meet the particular requirements of individual departments, and thirdly on being seen to be working with departments independently of the negotiating and control roles exercised by the Treasury and MPO. How effectively the Unit has been playing this part is for others to assess.

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Written communication for statisticians, economists and scientists	3-5 October 1984
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Writing about statistics	10-12 October 1984
Efficient administration in government	12-23 November 1984

Contact: Miss J Erwteman, Civil Service College
11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB
Telephone: 01-834 6644 ext 229/241 or GTN 2803 229/241

Economics and financial appraisal of investment options	14-16 September 1984
Public expenditure: planning and control of programme expenditure	26-28 September 1984
Financial Management Initiative — a review of departmental progress	17 October 1984

Contact: Mr J G Walsh, Civil Service College
11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB
Telephone: 01-834 6644 ext 402 or GTN 2803 402

Introduction to financial management	3-14 September
Financial accounting for managers/administrators	17-21 September 1984
Senior finance course: developments in financial management in government	26-28 September 1984
Management accounting for managers/administrators	22-26 October 1984

Contact: Mr D E G Griffiths, Civil Service College
Sunningdale Park, Ascot, Berks SL5 0QE
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A foundation course in administration	10-21 September 1984
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